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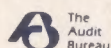
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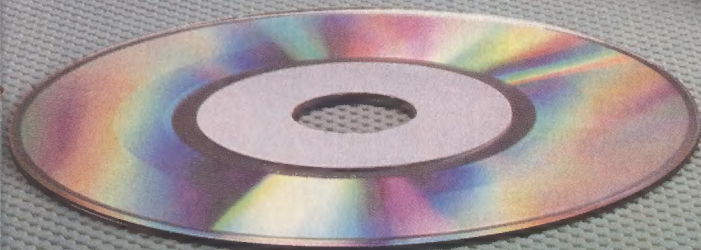
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The
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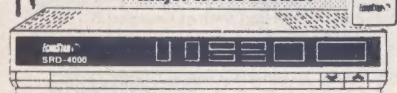
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It's been a half-dozen years since I was last active in the video market, and as I return to take the editorial helm here at *Video Magazine* I'm struck by how much has changed — and equally, by how much has not.

As I look over the video landscape today I see on retail displays and in homes products that were gleams in developers' eyes, or on drawing boards, or just coming to market a few short years back. Everywhere I see smaller, faster, better video products from innovative, aggressive companies that have made home video an integral part of our lives.

Half a decade ago the video marketplace was rife with format battles, incompatibility controversies and ongoing disputes over which medium could best deliver information and entertainment to the consumer. That hasn't changed. Many of the players, the issues and the competitive arenas are different today, but the marketplace is as untidy as ever and I for one think that's good news. I'm glad to see that video continues to be a vibrant, vital and contentious commercial enterprise and cultural phenomenon with a legion of opportunities for individuals and companies to make a mark.

That's especially good news for you, the serious video user, because you're one of the constants in the furiously accelerating and rapidly changing video scene, and the principal beneficiary of the results of these vendor confrontations. You decide which products deliver the entertainment and information value to meet your needs, and ultimately which will make it in the marketplace. We'll do our best to continue to supply you with the latest and most complete information you need to get the maximum value from your equipment and to keep you in the forefront of the video market.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on what we're doing right, what we can improve on, and what new topics or issues you'd like to see addressed in these pages. Drop me a line.

James M. Barry
Editor

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FEEDBACK

What's the fuss?

After reading your feature on VCR programming ("Prime Time for Timers," Oct. '91), I had to laugh. I own two Sony Beta VCRs, the EDV-7500 and the SL-HF600. Both are extremely easy to program. It's no problem to set the timer in under 35 seconds, and just four buttons are used to program. A button labeled "check" confirms the completed timer setting. I don't know who clamored for onscreen programming, but it seems to add confusion and complexity to the task of timeshift recording.

Don Manderfeld
Richfield, Minnesota

Nostalgia machines

As a former Betaphile, I read your "Vid-eotest" of Sony's SL-HF2100 Beta VCR (Oct. '91) with annoyance. I'm reminded of a General Motors plan to develop a new production run of '57 Chevys. What's the point? I stopped being a Betaphile when the Hi8 format was introduced, and think of it as an evolutionary step in development. All the Beta-max innovations are current Hi8 features.

Hi8 is Betamax, in a smaller cassette with a better picture. Hi8's PCM digital audio, RC time code and Y/C separation are worthy innovations that should be embraced. All the clamoring for a U.S. version of the 2100 "nostalgia machine" would have been better spent demanding more Hi8 consumer VCRs. I'd hate to see Hi8 go the way of Betamax and ED Beta as a consumer format, while Betaphiles throw their dollars at nostalgia.

Gene Windell
San Antonio, Texas

Living widescreen

Kenneth Korman's article on James Bond laserdiscs (Nov. '91) was enjoyable and informative. As a Bond collector, I've wondered why CBS/Fox still hasn't released *The Living Daylights* in its original widescreen format. It now has the distinction of being the only pan-and-scan Bond on disc. Where's the extras you'd expect for \$49.98? Neal Radke
Cudahy, Wisconsin



Jump to Wile: *The Living Daylights*, with Timothy Dalton, will make its widescreen laserdisc debut in '92.

Editor's note: The rights to *The Living Daylights* have been acquired by MGM/UA, and the company will release a Deluxe Letterbox Edition disc of the film, complete with Dolby Surround encoding, side three in CAV and the original theatrical trailer, in spring of '92.

In 8mm we trust

As a broadcast engineer with NBC-TV and an owner of a Hi8 video camera, I read with interest Roderick Woodcock's column comparing VHS with 8mm ("Technically Speaking," Nov. '91). He's absolutely correct in noting that impairments become more objectionable on smaller formats. I soon realized that fine dust wreaks havoc on 8mm tape.

I recommend sealing the cassette hatch airtight using vinyl tape. On professional camcorders, a refrigerator-type gasket is installed for this purpose. Since small tape is sensitive to wrinkling, one should load or unload the cassette only at the beginning or end of the reel. With a few precautions, 8mm can definitely be trusted.

David Vaughan
Woodbridge, Virginia

For the record

General Instrument does not make Channel Master satellite receivers, as was erroneously stated in Dec. '91 "Video Flashes." We regret the error.

VIDEO

magazine

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LATE NEWS

Go-Video goes forward

The maverick manufacturer that introduced the dual-deck VCR to the U.S. is expanding its offerings to three models. Go-Video plans to add a four-head, stereo hi-fi dual-deck VCR to its line this summer. It joins the original two-head, linear stereo VCR-2, and a new version of the VCR-2 that duplicates Macrovision-encoded tapes.

Amateur moviemakers unite!

A new organization helps would-be moviemakers make their dreams come true. United Video Features (UVF) offers a referral service for amateur scriptwriters, producers and cameramen, and will soon have a digital video-editing system for use by its members. Through a newsletter and seminars, UVF keeps members informed on new technology and techniques for making full-length video movies on the cheap. Interested videographers may call Steve Frost at 603-483-5129.

Mitsubishi launches camcorder line

One of the world's most innovative camcorder lines is headed for the U.S. this month. Mitsubishi, which has not sold camcorders here for two years, is introducing two VHS-C subcompacts and one S-VHS-C model. All carry features available on no other camcorder on the market today.

The most revolutionary of the group is the \$1,699 HS-C35U, an S-VHS-C hi-fi model with a unique system of interchangeable lenses. Unlike the lenses in Canon's L1 system, which incorporate focus, iris and zoom motors, the HS-C35U lenses are simple, bayonet-mount adapters for wide-angle, normal and telephoto shooting. Focus, iris and zoom functions take place within the camcorder chassis. This arrangement cuts cost considerably, while adding tremendous flexibility.

The company's new subcompacts boast a new dual-axis electronic image

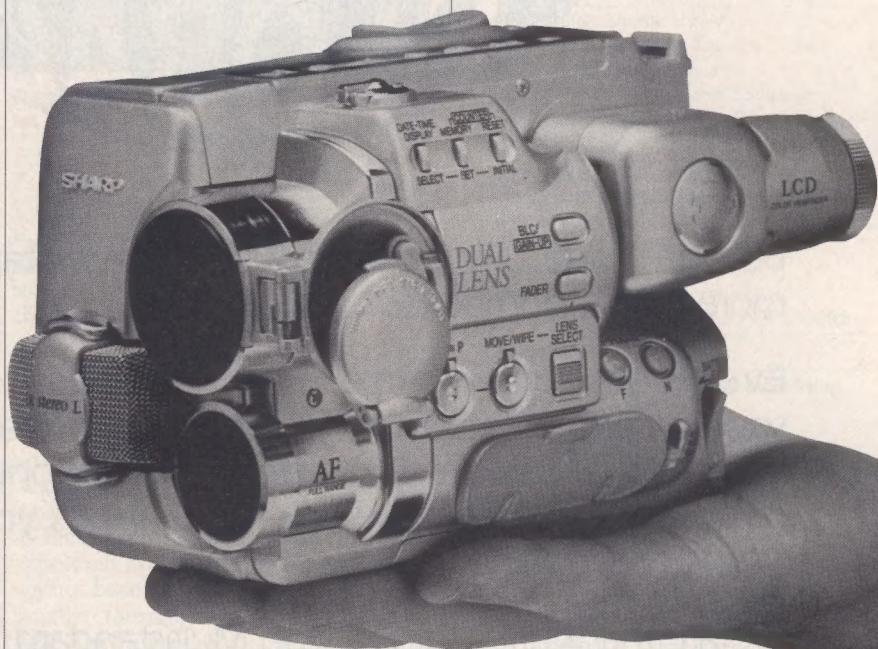
stabilization system that compensates for side-to-side movement as well as up-and-down shaking. The \$1,199 HS-CX4U is a basic model, while the \$1,299 HS-CX7U features hi-fi sound.

Sharp's crazy new 8mm

Sharp, the leader in full-size VHS camcorders, has introduced its first 8mm machine. Although most industry insiders expected Sharp to enter the 8mm market, none expected it to do so in

user can also wipe or fade between the two cameras. A picture-in-picture effect can also be created, with the wide-angle image surrounding the shot from the zoom lens. The inset picture window can be moved from side to side.

The \$1,499 VL-MX6U is a basic model with 3-lux sensitivity, two-speed zoom and full-range autofocus, while the \$1,699 VL-MX7U adds stereo sound and an LCD color viewfinder. Both are available in a traditional gray color, or with a stunning silver finish that recalls German 35mm cameras of the '30s and '40s.



Double Vision: Sharp's VL-MX8U features a twin-lens, twin-sensor camera section for instant zooms.

such a flamboyant way—the new Sharp 8mms are two of the most original camcorders we've ever seen. Both use a unique dual-lens/dual-sensor design to produce special effects that normally require expensive video processors.

The camcorders actually incorporate two separate video cameras. The bottom one uses a wide-angle lens with fixed focus, for a 62-degree field of view. The top one has a conventional 12x zoom lens with digital autofocus. This arrangement lets the user switch from full wide-angle to full telephoto instantly. A

Fast scans

The price of surround goes down.

AudioSource has added center-channel amplification to its popular SS Three surround-sound decoder, and has changed the input transistors for an eight-decibel improvement in signal-to-noise ratio. Now anyone who owns a hi-fi system can add full Dolby Pro-Logic surround—no extra amps required—for just \$400.

Toshiba adds VCR Plus. Toshiba will add VCR Plus circuitry to two of its VHS VCRs, the M-458 and M-658. Both will be available early this year. ■

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GAZETTE

The tricks of 'Terminator 2'

In the old days, if you wanted King Kong to climb a building, you had two choices: stop-motion photography, a painstaking hand-animation of a tiny model, performed one frame at a time, or cel animation, which involves filming hundreds of hand-drawn illustrations from plastic "cels." Now, there's a third, more effective alternative—computer-generated imagery (CGI)—most recently taken to new heights in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (LIVE Home Video). The effects work in this film is dazzling—a brilliant combination of old and new techniques that make audiences actually believe the unbelievable.

"Our computer animation department tripled in size for that film," notes Jill Jurkowitz, spokeswoman for Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), which handled the CGI end of the job. (Produced on a large budget and a tight schedule, T2's effects used a combination of CGI, models and masks supplied by ILM, Fantasy II, 4-Ward Productions and makeup maven Stan Winston.) The ILM sequences found the evil terminator (Robert Patrick) slithering through a barred window, having his head split in two by a shotgun blast, walking out of a flaming inferno and literally falling to pieces in a final fiery moment. Jurkowitz claims the most difficult effect was a sequence in which the evil terminator pours himself into a helicopter seat and then reconstitutes himself as a person. "We had to match dialog and motion," she says, "which can be especially tricky."

Yet little is simple where CGI is concerned. For any body metamorphosis (or "morphing"), a technician must give the computer the first frame in the transformation and the final result; the machine figures out how to fill in the transitional frames so that the first form mutates fluidly into the last.

That means creating mathematically defined three-dimensional computer models for all the characters or sets, then making an onscreen wireframe display of the model. The model is run through tests for fluidity and then "rendered," often the longest process. At



He'll Be Back: Complex computer-generated imagery brought *Terminator 2*'s hellish future to life.

this point, surface texture, color, lighting, shadows and reflections are added—to get it right, hours can be spent on a single frame. Digital compositing combines the figure with previously filmed background scenes. The finished sequence is electronically transferred back onto film, a single frame at a time.

"What we did took a lot of labor," says Jurkowitz, who reports that 35 ILM technicians worked for a year to craft just 50 shots for *Terminator 2*. That's less than five minutes of screen time, at a reported cost of \$6.4 million. Expensive? Yes. And the sweetest irony? Viewers have no idea about the painstaking work involved. But that's what magic is all about.

—Tom Soter

Norman Lear, 'Family' man

Back in '71, the controversial political humor of *All in the Family* sent shock waves of laughter and recognition through prime-time America. The show addressed on a weekly basis such formerly taboo subjects as racial prejudice and the Vietnam War, and it always did so with insight and humor. Series creator Norman Lear has gone on to many other projects—such as producing Rob Reiner's first movie, *This Is Spinal Tap*, as well as a new film called *Fried Green Tomatoes* and another network sitcom,



Where's My Beer? Jean Stapleton and Carroll O'Connor are back on the new *All in the Family* tape.

Love Child, for debut in January—but *All in the Family* remains a personal favorite.

The recent release of the *All in the Family 20th Anniversary Special* (Columbia TriStar Home Video) provided Lear with a unique opportunity to look back. "The show gets a lot of credit for changing attitudes, but I don't think it did anything but get people to talk," Lear says. "If 2,000 years of Judeo-Christian ethic couldn't diminish intolerance and bigotry, what's a little sitcom going to do?"

Hosted by Lear and compiling highlights from the show's nine Emmy award-winning seasons, *20th Anniversary Special* is peppered with commentary from early fans of the show as well as cast members Carroll O'Connor, Jean Stapleton, Rob Reiner and Sally Struthers. But time has scarcely blunted the show's impact. Lear contends the show's primary intention was to bring an audience, "laughing or crying," to its knees. "You can't do that unless you totally arrest people by dealing with things they care about. Archie Bunker was like my [real-life] father, but when he called me the laziest white kid he ever met, he was knocking an entire race just to call me a name."

Lear has little patience for current TV producers who merely pander to public tastes. "There used to be this adage, 'Nobody ever lost money underestimating the intelligence of the American people.' That's crap. This a smart populace. They know when they're being lied to, but we don't have anybody with the guts to fight back."

—Shari Roman

Regarding Nichols

Director Mike Nichols exploded onto the American film scene more than two decades ago with a series of frank, explicit movies that shocked some audiences and left others clamoring for

more. Films like *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966), *The Graduate* (1967) and *Carnal Knowledge* (1971) explored adult relationships—and sexuality—in a way that wasn't necessarily graphic, just more honest than other movies.

In Nichols' latest film, *Regarding Henry* (Paramount Home Video), Harrison Ford and Annette Bening star as a heartless yuppie couple—he's a Wall Street shark while she's an empty socialite—who rediscover traditional values after a random act of violence changes their lives. Has age finally caught up with the maverick director? Have the conservative '90s left their mark? "I'm really the last to know," Nichols told us recently. "It's hard for me to see patterns in my own work—I'm just glad they let me keep doing it. But 'conservative' is probably the wrong word. 'Less angry' would be a little more accurate."

The look of Nichols' films has changed almost as much as their content. Once known for his careful wide-screen compositions—both *The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge* are available on heavily letterboxed Criterion Collection laserdiscs—the director now opts for the far less drastic 1.85 aspect ratio for his movies. "It's all about video and TV," Nichols explains. "Letterboxing



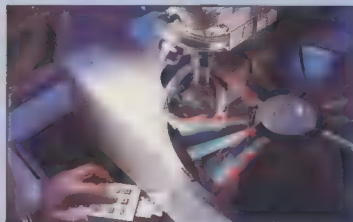
Making the Scene: Mike Nichols and Harrison Ford watch a video playback on the *Regarding Henry* set.

gives you too small a picture, and pan-and-scan is unbearable. But now I love composing in 1.85 because I want to make film technique invisible—I don't want it to be a part of the audience's experience. And the Panavision frame makes you more self-conscious because you really have to work at compositions. Now I can just follow my instincts about a story, and I don't miss the wider screen at all."

—KK

Save the Planet. National Video Resources, a project of the Rockefeller Foundation intended to bring independent films and video to wider audiences, has joined forces with the Video Project and the Seventh Generation mail-order company to compile the Environmental Video Collection catalog. Among the catalog's 39 titles are a number of programs previously unavailable to the general public; others were recently repriced for direct sale. All the videos—from Bill Forsyth's feature-film comedy *Local Hero* to Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*—are linked by concern for our deteriorating environment. For orders or a free catalog, call 800-456-1177.

Pressing Matters. Pioneer recently opened a second laserdisc pressing facility in Carson City, California, increasing the company's capacity from 600,000 to 1.6 million discs per month. A recent tour of the 304,000-square-foot facility revealed the latest in not only laserdisc technology, but in other fields such as robotics—mobile machines are used at several points in the manufacturing process to increase efficiency and reduce the risk of disc-destroying contamination. The plant's increased capacity should further improve the availability of titles and provide an even stronger foundation for the format's continued growth.



Final Exam: Quality control at Pioneer's plant.

Video Flashes

VIDEOTESTS



Programming Plus: RCA's VR690HF VCR incorporates VCR Plus circuitry, which allows a user to program the deck by entering numerical codes from TV listings.

VIDEOTEST 617

RCA VHS VCR with VCR Plus

the four- to seven-number code listed next to the program. For those times when you can't find a VCR Plus code, the deck also includes RCA's onscreen

The VR690HF is one of the easiest VCRs to program—its VCR Plus circuitry reduces this often arduous task to a few touches of the number keys. Just look up the program you want to record in *TV Guide* or any other publication that carries VCR Plus codes, and punch in

programming system, which is one of the easiest to operate.

For the most part, its features are typical of a midpriced, four-head hi-fi deck. Exceptions include front-panel inputs that may be used for audio-only recording, an onscreen instruction and troubleshooting manual, remote control of two RCA VCRs, multispeed slow-motion, an automatic head cleaner and a universal remote that controls numerous TV brands. It has no flying erase head, so it's not suitable for serious editing, but it does have a front-mounted synchro edit jack that makes dubbing from an RCA camcorder easy.

You might have a tough time picking out this deck in the store—surprisingly, the VCR Plus circuitry doesn't show on the deck or the remote. The deck looks

RCA VR690HF VHS VCR



Price: \$629

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
11.7 lbs.; 3-1/2 x
14-3/4 x 12-5/8 inches

Tape Format & Speeds:
VHS; SP, LP, SLP

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search:
locking/non-locking—5x,
SP: 9x, LP: 15x, SLP

**Fast Forward/
Rewind Time:**
3-1/4 min. for T-120

Remote Pause:
edit in/out on front
panel

Remote Control:
IR wireless with buttons
for VCR 1 on, VCR 2
on, TV/VCR, off/power,
play, rewind/search, fast
forward/off, stop, re-
cord, pause, frame

advance, 10-digit keypad, 100, display, clear, program, tape speed, help and edit; rockers for slow speed up/down and tracking up/down; and controls for TV power, previous channel and mute, plus rockers for volume and channel

Counter Digits:
5—hrs:mins:secs.

Audio: linear mono,
hi-fi AFM stereo

Tuning Method:
frequency synthesis

Channel Selectors:
programmable up/down
scan on VCR, scan
plus direct access on
remote

Preset Method:
auto programming with

manual add/erase

**Broadcast Tuning
Range:**
2 to 13, 14 to 69

Cable Tuning Range:
A-8, 2 to 13, A to W,
W+1 to W+84, A-5 to
A-1

Timer:
8-event/1-year using ei-
ther VCR Plus codes or
onscreen programming

Special Features:
VCR Plus program-
ming, still frame, frame
advance, slow motion,
auto rewind, onscreen
displays/instructions,
auto head cleaning,
audio-only recording,
front-panel inputs,
counter memory

Absent Features:
speed play, flying erase
head, audio dub, video

HIGHLIGHTS

VCR Plus, last year's most revolutionary video accessory, is this year's hottest VCR feature. RCA is first off the blocks with three VCR Plus decks, which can be programmed by punching in simple numerical codes from TV listings. The \$629 VR690HF reviewed here is a four-head hi-fi model with front-panel inputs and synchro edit. Picture, audio, ease of use and overall performance are all very good to excellent, comparable to all but the very best VHS hi-fi VCRs. The \$529 VR665 is virtually identical, but doesn't have VCR Plus or front inputs. We recommend both—if you want the extra features and easier programming, get the higher-priced model.

dub, insert edit, titles/graphics, indexing, manual audio level controls, audio level display

RESULTS

**Horizontal
Resolution:**
230-240 lines

S/N Ratios (dB):
unweighted video—47.3
SP, 44.5 LP, 43.2 SLP;
weighted video—53.8
SP, 52.3 LP, 51 SLP;
chroma AM—44.3 SP,
42 LP, 39.7 SLP;
chroma PM—42.7 SP,
37.8 LP, 37.7 SLP

**Audio Frequency
Response:**
hi-fi—20 Hz-20 kHz,
+0/-1.7 dB all speeds;
linear, -3 dB—100

Hz-12.5 kHz SP, 75
Hz-5 kHz LP, 75 Hz-4
kHz SLP

**Hi-Fi Dynamic
Range:** 83.1 dB

Linear Audio S/N:
38.5 dB

Audio Distortion:
hi-fi—0.3%, linear—
1.1%

RATINGS

Picture:
very good/excellent

Audio:
very good/excellent

Ease of Use:
very good/excellent

Overall:
very good/excellent

like many other RCA models, with a simple, attractive design and basic transport controls on the front. A door hides a few other controls and the front inputs. The rear panel has the usual inputs and outputs.

The contoured, well-balanced remote breaks from tradition with several unusual controls. Of course, it has transport and tuner buttons, with a 10-digit keypad. But its power buttons throw a few curves. Separate buttons turn the VCR on and off, and there are buttons to turn on a second RCA VCR. There is also an on button for a TV set, but the off/power button turns off all devices simultaneously. So if you want to turn off the VCR but continue watching TV, you should turn off the VCR at the machine, or you'll have to turn the TV back on again. Also, the stop and eject buttons are combined — if you're not used to this setup, you may find yourself accidentally ejecting tapes.

The TV controls operate 12 different types sold under 30 brand names, but there is no list of compatible TV sets — just try the options until you find out if the remote works with your set. The help button calls up an onscreen instruction manual and troubleshooting guide.

Programming the VR690HF will be a treat for those who have given up trying to program VCRs. The VCR Plus system offers one-time, Monday-through-Friday and weekly options. Unlike the original VCR Plus remote, the circuitry does not control cable boxes. To record scrambled programs, cable subscribers will have to leave the cable box tuned to the correct channel.

Some cable users in large metropolitan areas with multiple cable systems may need to go through a one-time setup procedure. This tells the VCR Plus circuit which channels in your system correspond to those in the TV listings. Ease of use for the VR690HF is very good to excellent.

Picture quality is very good to excellent, competitive with other midpriced VHS hi-fi decks. At 230 to 240 lines, horizontal resolution is slightly low, but this helps the deck achieve higher signal-to-noise ratios. Audio quality is also very good to excellent. Our overall rating is very good to excellent. ■

VIDEOTEST
618

CANON 8mm camcorder

its flat shape makes it easy to pack and carry. Its features list is exceeded only by those of advanced Hi8 machines.

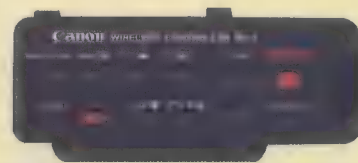
Canon achieved the UCI's compact design by rethinking virtually every part of the 8mm camcorder. The biggest advance is the seven-group, nine-element zoom, which has two glass aspherical lenses. To create them, Canon had to develop a completely new lens grinding technique — previously, aspherical lenses had to be cast in plastic. The lenses help shrink, lighten and shorten the camera section while allowing a wider angle of view than any other Canon camcorder. The new Canon-built compact transport also deserves special praise.

Few other camcorders offer so many features. The list begins with a TTL fuzzy logic autofocus that operates continuously to 0.4 inches from the lens in wide-angle mode and two feet in telephoto. It maintains sharp focus even during pans and tilts. The UCI also has an 8x zoom lens, a gain-up mode for 2-lux sensitivity, 25-zone auto white balance and an onscreen menu system.

The title of "world's smallest camcorder" changes hands often. The current champ is Canon's UCI, an 8mm machine that is almost as convenient as a 35mm point-and-shoot. At only 1.28 pounds, it is incredibly light, and

HIGHLIGHTS

Canon's UCI may be the most portable camcorder ever — it's roughly the size, shape and weight of a James Michener paperback. Its menu system is the most extensive we've seen on a camcorder, and its titler is one of the most versatile. An infrared remote control clips to the side. Picture and audio quality are good, ease of use is very good to excellent, and overall performance is very good. At \$1,499, it is a good value we recommend highly.



Its two-page digital superimposer stores high-contrast titles or graphics and superimposes the pages separately, together or alternately. The latter mode allows simple animation. For a more sophisticated look, titles can be wiped or scrolled, opaque or transparent, and shadowed. The memo button adjusts title density through eight levels.

Within the three-screen menu system are shutter speeds, white balance lock, some title options, edit erase



It's a Snap:
An infrared remote (above) snaps onto the side of Canon's UCI 8mm camcorder.

(which returns to the beginning of a poorly shot scene if the camcorder has been recording for less than one minute), gain up, trigger/hold-down fade, a continuous or 30-second burst self-timer, blank tape search, line in/out switching, and on/off selectors for the tally light and the IR sensor.

Like most camcorders, the UC1 is designed for right-handed operation. It has the traditional strap that goes around the back of the hand, a run/stop button for the right thumb, and a zoom rocker under the first two fingers. Most camera controls occupy the left side, including buttons for the titler, fader, backlight compensator, and near and far power focus. Some double as VCR controls. The viewfinder tube extends rearward for correct viewing and can swing upward for low-angle shooting.

What's unusual is that part of the left side swings outward—it's really an infrared remote control. It can be operated while attached to the camcorder, or detached to operate camera and playback modes at distances up to 16 feet. It has transport controls, and buttons for record run/stop, and zoom wide and tele. A release lets you lower the remaining part of the left side to reveal the

Canon UC1 8mm Camcorder

Price: \$1,499

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 1.8 lbs. including remote and battery; 6-3/8 x 3-1/8 x 5-1/2 inches

Image Sensor: 1/3-inch CCD

Lens: f/2.6; 8x (6-48mm) power zoom

Filter Diameter: 37mm

Minimum Focusing Distance: 10mm at wide-angle, 0.7m at tele

Autofocus: TTL fuzzy logic switchable to manual

Minimum Illumination: rated—2 lux using gain up; measured—3.9 lux, normal; 1.7 lux, gain up

Iris: auto with 1/4-stop auto BLC and 1.5-stop manual BLC

Auto Fade: to white; trigger/manual in, manual out

Shutter Speeds (sec.): normal, 1/100, 1/250, 1/500, 1/1,000, 1/2,000, 1/4,000, 1/10,000

White Balance: auto with lock

Viewfinder: electronic, with diopter adjustment, onscreen indicators for WB lock, self-timer, counter, shutter speed, tape, gain up, menu, battery, superimpose page/color, dew, fade, sensor, tally light, line in, time, date, transport mode and caution

Viewfinder Controls: vertical position, diopter focus

VCR Controls: play, rewind/search, fast forward/search, stop and record start/stop

Microphone: omnidirectional electret condenser type with automatic wind noise reduction

Jacks: external mic, DC out for RFU, video in/out, audio in/out

Tape Format & Speed: 8mm SP

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search: 9x forward, 7x reverse, 15x high speed in either direction

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: approx 8 min. for P6-120

Remote Control: IR wireless with buttons for zoom wide, zoom tele, record start/stop, on screen, tape return, rewind/search, play, fast forward/search, counter reset, record, stop and still

Counter Digits & Memory: 5—hrs:mins:secs.

Audio: hi-fi AFM mono

Titles/Graphics: date, time and two pages of superimposable memory in 8 colors with reverse, scroll/wipe, shadow, see-through

Special Features: still frame, insert edit, coun-

ter memory, blank tape search, flying erase head, tally light off, IR sensor off, self-timer, edit erase

Absent Features: earphone jack, indexing, remote control jack for editing, manual iris

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 240-250 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): video—unweighted 41.1, weighted 48.3; chroma AM—40.7; chroma PM—36.7

Audio Frequency Response: 20 Hz-15 kHz, +0.5/-3 dB, down 6.9 dB at 20 kHz

Audio S/N: 62 dB

Audio Distortion: 0.3%

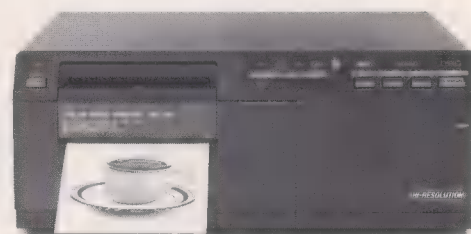
RATINGS

Picture: good

Audio: good

Ease of Use: very good/excellent

Overall: very good



No matter how you take your coffee,

ject button and the cassette compartment.

An external microphone jack sits at the front of the left panel, and the front has audio/video input/output jacks and a DC output for the RF converter. The battery locks onto the back with the release along the top edge.

Almost all the controls are easy to figure out, but if you skip the manual you may miss some features. The backlight control is unusual in that it operates automatically in quarter-stop steps, and manually in one 1.5-stop step. Some users might prefer buttons for certain functions in the menu system, like shutter speed, white balance lock and gain up.

One thing to watch out for is the power switch, which is next to the zoom rocker. It can be easy to shut off the camcorder accidentally. Also, the hinges for the remote control should be handled carefully to avoid breaking them. Although one-handed operation is easy, we recommend using two hands for steadier shots. Ease of use is very good to excellent.

Picture and audio quality are good compared to other 8mm camcorders, about as Canon rates them, and in the

case of audio, slightly better than rated. Overall, we rate the UC1 very good. In fact, it may be the most convenient camcorder we've tried. ■

TECH TIPS

Calling all tipsters

Do you know something we don't about VCRs, TVs, camcorders and other home video equipment? We'll share it with our readers if you share it with us as a "Tech Tip." We'll also give you credit and a \$25 bounty for each tip we publish. Tips should be informative and to the point. Please include your name, address and phone number — and a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish your submission returned. Send submissions to Tech Tips, *Video Magazine*, 460 West 34 St., New York, NY 10001.

The shadow knows

To create ■ sophisticated shadow look for titles memorized with a camcorder's

digital superimposer, print the title with a fiber-point pen on a white background. Superimpose it in the color of your choice, then shift the camcorder slightly to the right or left. The letters on the background will appear to be shadows of the superimposed letters. Press the record button and you've got it. This procedure works best with your camcorder on a tripod.

Henry N. Perella
Providence, Rhode Island

Surveillance by PIP

The picture-in-picture (PIP) feature on some TV sets or VCRs can double as a simple security system. Connect an old surveillance camera (or any video camera, for that matter) to a video input of the TV or VCR. You can mount the camera above your front door, or wherever you prefer, as long as there's enough light for the camera to function.

When the doorbell rings, hitting the PIP button while you're watching TV will let you see who is there without leaving your chair. This technique also works to keep tabs on sleeping infants, children at play or anything else you need to keep an eye on. Ted Cantrell
Fort Lewis, Washington

Serve your 35mm slides and negatives any way you like with Fotovix III. It's the surprisingly affordable and easy to use photo-to-video processor that perks up business presentations and home photo libraries. Fotovix III also inputs instantly to floppy disks, for sharp computer imaging



and desktop publishing. For larger format films, there's the advanced

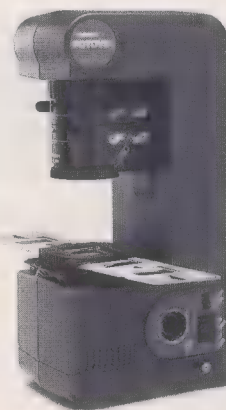
Fotovix II-X. And if special effects are your cup of tea, there's Tamron's Video Editor II.

For a demonstration see ■ Tamron dealer or write

to: Tamron Industries, Inc., Box 388, Port Washington, NY 11050.

In Canada: Amplis Foto, 22 Telson Road, Markham, Ont. L3R 1E5.

TAMRON
FOTOVIX



Fotovix can make it for you.



VIDEOTESTS

VIDEOTEST
619

PANASONIC 31-inch monitor/ receiver

When they were introduced in Japan last year, Panasonic's Gao monitor/receivers quickly became the country's number-one seller. Now the company has released a U.S. version called SuperFlat. The sets, available in a 27-inch model and the 31-inch CTP-3196SF reviewed here, earn their name because they have 30 percent less face curvature than conventional TV sets. One look at the picture immediately shows why these sets took Japan by storm.

Because of its flat, dark face, the new tube reflects little ambient light. A multi-prefocus electron gun with six electrodes and three lenses keeps the focus sharp at both the center and the corners. It uses an Invar shadow mask that does not distort color when it is heated and advanced circuitry for such func-



Cut the Curves: With 30 percent less face curvature, SuperFlat sets produce more realistic pictures.

tions as velocity modulation scan, black level expansion, video noise reduction, pincushion correction, wide-band CCD comb filtering and both vertical and horizontal sharpness.

Complementing the picture is a 10-watt-per-channel stereo amplifier, which

Panasonic CTP-3196SF SuperFlat Monitor/Receiver

Price: \$1,800

Weight:
132 pounds

Size:
25-1/4 x 32-1/8 x 18
inches

Power Use:
165 watts

Front-Panel Controls:
on slide-out drawer
panel—buttons for power, display, menu, normal, video, antenna, TV/video, advance/recall, volume up, volume down, channel up and channel down; inside compartment—slide switch for TV speakers on/off

Screen Size: 31 inches
diagonally

Speaker Size: two

4-inch woofers and two concentric 2 x 3-inch oval tweeters in integrated enclosures

Type of Tuning:
frequency synthesis

Method of Tuning:
programmable scan on set, scan plus direct access on remote

Broadcast Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 14 to 69

Cable Tuning Range:
125 additional channels

Remote Control: IR wireless with TV control buttons—power, sleep, TV/video, recall, mute, rapid tune, skip, 10-digit keypad, video, normal, menu, 100, antenna, PIP, size, audio swap, freeze, replay, search, picture swap and cursors for up, down, right/plus and left/minus plus rockers for volume, favorite

channel scan and channel scan; VCR/VDP control—VCR/VDP switch, channel scan rocker and buttons for power, TV/VCR, pause, frame advance, rewind/search, stop, play, fast forward/search and record with safety

Inputs: S-video—2, video—3, stereo audio—3, antenna—2

Outputs: video—1, stereo audio—1 fixed level and 1 variable level, RF—loop out

External Speaker Connectors: 2 for surround

Internal Audio Amplifier Power:
front—10 watts/channel, surround—10 watts

Special Features:
headphone jack, PIP, front inputs, channel lock, program timer, selectable color tempera-

HIGHLIGHTS

Panasonic's SuperFlat monitors incorporate some of the biggest advances in the history of direct-view sets. The new SuperFlat tube produces an outstanding, high-contrast picture. Its Dome audio system puts many small hi-fi systems to shame, without destroying the set's clean lines. Picture and audio quality are excellent, ease of use is very good to excellent, and overall performance is excellent. At \$1,800, it is a bit expensive, but we think that once you see and hear it, you'll reach for your checkbook—it's one of our all-time favorites.

ture, video noise reduction, three picture setting memory banks

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution:
rated—700 lines; confirmed to 650 lines

Picture S/N (dB):
video—58.3, chroma AM—65.7, chroma PM—65.2

Accuracy of Colors:
very good/excellent at standard setting

Audio Frequency

Response: line out—20 Hz-20 kHz, +0.4/-0.7 dB; speakers—30 Hz-15 kHz

Audio S/N: 79.1 dB

Total Harmonic Distortion: line out—0.2%, speaker—1.9%

RATINGS

Picture: excellent

Audio: excellent

Ease of Use:
very good/excellent

Overall: excellent

VIDEO SHOWCASE



BOGEN 3169 CINE/VIDEO TRIPOD

**The ideal
camcorder
companion.**

Easy to use and
easy to handle,
the 3169

combines Bogen 3001 Tripod Legs and a 3130 QR Micro Fluid Head with Quick Release Plate. The Bogen 3001 Tripod is the lightest (about 3 lbs.) and the smallest (folds to 20 1/2 in.), but is one of the most versatile tripods we offer. Sturdy, hard finish aluminum legs feature 3 click stop spread angles and each has a sure grip, quick-acting, non-fouling lever lock. The Bogen 3169 is just one of a wide choice of tripods, fluid heads, dollies and accessories.

See your dealer or write to Bogen Photo Corp., 565 East Crescent Avenue, Ramsey, N.J. 07446-0506; (201) 818-9500

Circle Showcase # 1

OP/TECH USA Compact Video Strap & Fast Cap Camcorder Comfort and Convenience



OP/TECH USA's new Compact Video Strap takes the strain out of carrying a camcorder. Using soft, durable neoprene and a unique "comfort stretch" backing, this product is the most comfortable video strap available. It makes even the heaviest

camcorders feel 50 percent lighter and 100 percent more comfortable, and is available in eleven fashion colors. For even more convenience, OP/TECH USA offers the Fast Cap, a revolutionary lens cover. It attaches to a lens or filter, and the base stays in place while the hinged, spring-loaded lid can be flipped open by a flick of the thumb. The Fast Cap is the last cap you'll ever need.

For the dealer nearest you call, 1-800-251-7815 or write OP/TECH USA, 290 Arden Dr., Belgrade, MT 59714

Circle Showcase # 2

All New! VIDEO SHOPPER

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VS6

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Get more information on any advertisers featured in Video Showcase or find out where the nearest dealer is for that product. Simply circle the product number along with your desired shopping option and we'll do the rest!

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Showcase #3

- A. Send me literature
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Showcase #4

- A. Send me literature
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our-way audio/video of satellite TV options alternatives—and from order or CD player at all times. And with you can toggle on-at once. What's more, satellite sound in surround sound and s the essential control nt experience.

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VIDEOTESTS

VIDEOTEST
619

PANASONIC 31-inch monitor/ receiver

When they were introduced in Japan last year, Panasonic's Gao monitor/receivers quickly became the country's number-one seller. Now the company has released a U.S. version called SuperFlat. The sets, available in a 27-inch model and the 31-inch CTP-3196SF reviewed here, earn their

name because they have 30 percent less face curvature than conventional TV sets. One look at the picture immediately shows why these sets took Japan by storm.

Because of its flat, dark face, the new tube reflects little ambient light. A multi-prefocus electron gun with six electrodes and three lenses keeps the focus sharp at both the center and the corners. It uses an Invar shadow mask that does not distort color when it is heated and advanced circuitry for such func-



Cut the Curves: With 30 percent less face curvature, SuperFlat sets produce more realistic pictures.

tions as velocity modulation scan, black level expansion, video noise reduction, pincushion correction, wide-band CCD comb filtering and both vertical and horizontal sharpness.

Complementing the picture is a 10-watt-per-channel stereo amplifier, which

HIGHLIGHTS

Panasonic's SuperFlat monitors incorporate some of the biggest advances in the history of direct-view sets. The new SuperFlat tube produces an outstanding, high-contrast picture. Its Dome audio system puts

Panasonic
CTP-3196SF
SuperFlat
Monitor/Receiver

Price: \$1,800

4-inch woofers and two channel scan and chan-



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See your dealer or write to Bogen Photo Corp., 565 East Crescent Avenue, Ramsey, N.J. 07446-0506; (201) 818-9500

Circle Showcase # 1

OP/TECH USA Compact Video Strap & Fast Cap Camcorder Comfort and Convenience

OP/TECH USA's new Compact Video Strap takes the strain out of carrying a camcorder. Using soft, durable neoprene and a unique "comfort stretch" backing, this product is the most comfortable video strap available. It makes even the heaviest

camcorders feel 50 percent lighter and 100 percent more comfortable, and is available in eleven fashion colors. For even more convenience, OP/TECH USA offers the Fast Cap, a revolutionary lens cover. It attaches to a lens or filter, and the base stays in place while the hinged, spring-loaded lid can be flipped open by a flick of the thumb. The Fast Cap is the last cap you'll ever need.

For the dealer nearest you call, 1-800-251-7815 or write OP/TECH USA, 290 Arden Dr., Belgrade, MT 59714



Circle Showcase # 2

All New! VIDEO SHOPPER

Magazine For The Hands-On Video User

Are you a video enthusiast who rolls up his sleeves and works with video? Then the new magazine VIDEO SHOPPER is designed for you. Articles stress how-to-do-it information, editing, pre- and post production,

taping techniques, program collecting and new products and accessories that help you add on, upgrade and enhance your video system. Plus, in every issue, you'll find VIDEO TRADER, our very successful newsletter that contains hundreds of ads from people just like you who want to buy, sell or trade anything and everything related to video.

For a \$9.97 subscription price, you can receive 6 issues of VIDEO SHOPPER. Send check or money order to VIDEO

Circle Showcase # 3

Chaparral Monterey Satellite Receivers

*Quite
Simply...The
Best in Sights
& Sounds*



The Monterey satellite receiver's unique four-way audio/video switcher lets you easily select from a host of satellite TV options or as many as three other audio/video alternatives—and from any room in the house. Your VCR, camcorder or CD player can be on-line and entertainment-ready at all times. And with the receiver's digital color P-I-P functions, you can toggle on-screen between any two of these inputs at once. What's more, several Monterey models offer the best in satellite sound in digital or analog stereo, and with Dolby surround sound and dynamic noise reduction. The Monterey is the essential control center to the ultimate home entertainment experience.

For the name and location of the Chaparral dealer nearest you call: (408) 435-1530

Circle Showcase # 4

The Mitsubishi
CS-3535R 35" TV
features a fine
pitch screen, digital
comb filter,
invar shadow mask,
velocity scan
modulation, dynamic
beam forming, and
an anti-static coating.

In other words, "Wow, what a picture!"



When we introduced the first 35" direct view TV back in 1986, people couldn't believe that a picture that big could also be that sharp and that beautiful.

It's a reaction that has become more pronounced with every passing year. And this year is no exception, thanks to Mitsubishi's commitment to technical innovation.

Take, for example, our exclusive Diamond Vision® picture tube. A direct descendant of our stadium display screens, it delivers optimum contrast and color even under the most challenging light conditions.

And this year, we're treating selected Diamond Vision tubes with a special coating that boosts contrast an additional

20% while forming an anti-static shield against dust. It also absorbs ambient room light rather than reflecting it, so your picture never looks washed out.

Our Dynamic Beam Forming technology resulted from the fact that electron beams become distorted as they reach the edges and corners of the screen. Reshaping and refocusing the beams results in a much sharper overall picture.

Also contributing generously to a sharper picture is our exclusive Fine Pitch Screen. By reducing the pitch, or horizontal distance between the phosphor stripes, it delivers a 20% improvement in detail.

We could go on and on about the picture enhancing advantages of our digital comb filters, invar shadow masks and quote from a considerable list of other technical specifications.

But to really appreciate the remarkable picture you get with the CS-3535R direct view 35", you need to do some basic research of your own.

Turn it on and watch it.



MITSUBISHI

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drives Panasonic's new Dome sound system. It uses two-way speakers in sealed cabinets behind the tube. Ports conduct the sound through cleverly camouflaged grilles in the bezel to maintain accurate stereo perspective. The tuner uses MTS stereo decoding with dbx noise reduction. Surround-sound circuitry powers two rear speakers, which are not supplied.

Convenience features include a picture-in-picture (PIP) that may be placed anywhere on the screen in two sizes, with freeze, swap, audio swap and separate picture controls. The PIP also offers selective channel search, selective video input and an eight-frame instant replay. In addition to the standard programmable scan tuning there is a favorite channel memory, which stores up to 15 channels. Three favorite picture settings may also be stored. A clock, a sleep timer, parental channel lockout control and a two-program timer add to its flexibility.

Little but the picture tube is visible from the front. The narrow pedestal hides a small drawer with simple controls for most functions and the menu system. A door at the right opens to reveal a switch for the internal speakers, a

headphone jack and S-video/video/stereo audio jacks.

The back seems equally bare because Panasonic covered the jack panel with a door to conceal unsightly wires. The removable door hides four columns of jacks for input and output, connectors for surround speakers, two antenna inputs and a loop-through output from the antenna 2 feed. Input 2 and program out have columns of RCA jacks for video and stereo audio while input 1 has an additional S-video connector that disables the video jack if an S-video plug is inserted. The fourth column has variable-level audio jacks for feeding a stereo system.

The remote control exposes commonly used buttons, like power, volume and channel up and down on the front. A cover on the rear conceals more esoteric controls, such as the unusual PIP functions and controls for a cable box. VCR controls poke through the cover. The flap can be folded under the remote so all controls are exposed.

The set is designed to be operated primarily from the remote. The only control in the drawer that does not appear on the remote is display, which initiates a demonstration mode. Three of

the remote's buttons might be misleading. The recall button does not call back the previous channel, but activates the time/channel/audio mode display. Rapid tune calls back the last channel, and skip is a new feature that lets you channel-hop for up to six minutes in one-minute increments before automatically switching back to the original channel.

The PIP may be activated without lifting the flap. There is no second tuner, so operating most PIP functions requires an external video source. Video and sound adjustment, setup, picture settings and advanced features are all manipulated through onscreen displays. Unfortunately, some displays fill the entire screen so none of the picture shows through. This is the one weakness in an otherwise almost-perfect system. Ease of use is very good to excellent.

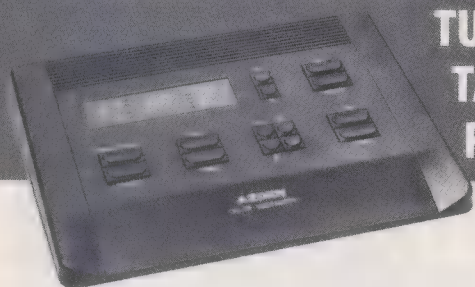
Picture quality is excellent. Panasonic rates the set at 700 lines of horizontal resolution, which we verified visually to 650 lines. The electronics compensate for the extremely low curvature of the SuperFlat tube so there is little geometric distortion, and very low variation in focus from the center to the edges of the picture. The Invar shadow

continued on page 103

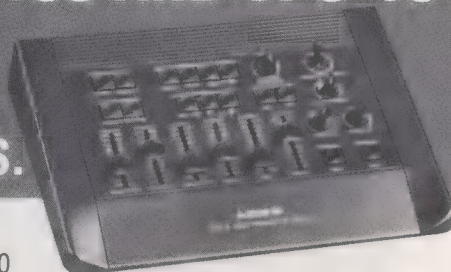
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The difference between zoom and zoooooooooooooooooom.

If you're looking for a camcorder that can bring the action up close, here are three words of advice: Hitachi Digital Zoom.

The amazing fact is, while most ordinary camcorders can get you only 8 times closer, Hitachi's new Digital Zoom is capable of magnification up to 100 times. Of course, as with all digital camcorders, at extremely high zoom levels, picture clarity diminishes.

So now, when your Little Leaguer is playing deep center field, you can catch every detail from the seats behind home plate.

When your favorite singing group comes to town, you can



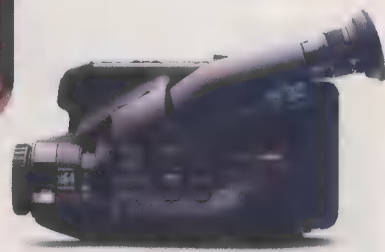
record them close up from the last row of the balcony.

And when all the zoo animals

are hiding in the background, you can bring them eyeball to eyeball.

With Hitachi Digital Zoom, the possibilities are endless.

To learn more about Digital Zoom and other innovations like Accushot, Artificial Intelligence and Autohead Cleaner, call 1-800-HITACHI. Your dealer will show you that the difference between ordinary camcorders and Hitachi camcorders is, among other things, a whole lot of zoooooooooooooooooom.



HITACHI

VIDEOTESTS

VIDEOTEST
620

HITACHI 8mm camcorder

Hitachi amazed the camcorder world last year when it introduced a VHS-C camcorder that flattens for easy carrying. Now it brings the same convenience to 8mm. The top quarter of the VM-E25A swings over 90 degrees to become the grip, camera section and viewfinder. When flattened, the VM-E25A fits in a three-inch briefcase and still leaves room for papers.

But that is not its only trick. It also carries a unique set of digital effects, including modes that let a user squeeze or stretch the picture horizontally, a 64x digital zoom with a viewfinder magnification readout, and 24 superimposable color graphics. A remote control stashes inside the cassette compartment. For point-and-shoot convenience, it uses artificial intelligence, or fuzzy logic, to control focus, iris, backlight compensation (BLC) and shutter speeds to 1/250-second. Shutter speeds to 1/10,000-sec-



Concealed Camcorder: Hitachi's VM-E25A folds flat for easy carrying (top) and unfolds for shooting.

ond may be selected manually.

A slide switch on the left rear edge releases a catch that allows the top part of the camcorder to fold to the right, so

Hitachi VM-E25A 8mm Camcorder

Price: \$1,300

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
1.7 lbs.: 4-1/4 x 2-3/8 x 7-7/8 inches, grip vertical

Image Sensor:
1/3-inch CCD

Lens:
f/2. 8x (6-48mm) zoom



Filter Diameter: 34mm
Minimum Focusing Distance: almost to surface of lens

Autofocus:
TTL fuzzy logic

Minimum Illumination:
rated—4 lux, measured—5.7 lux for 50 IRE

Iris: fuzzy logic auto with auto BLC

Auto Fade: hold-down type, about 4 secs.

Shutter Speeds (sec.): auto exposure—in four steps from 1/60 to 1/250; fixed—normal, 1/120, 1/250, 1/1,000, 1/2,000 and 1/10,000

White Balance: auto

Viewfinder: electronic with adjustable diopter and onscreen indicators for shutter speed, battery level, manual focus, zoom mode/magnification, low light, self-timer, counter, menu, dual time/date

Viewfinder Controls: diopter focus

VCR Controls: fast forward/search, play, rewind/search, stop, pause, review and eject

Microphone: stereo electret condenser

Jacks: multipin—A/V in/out and synchro edit

Tape Format & Speed: 8mm SP

Video Heads: 2

Cue & Review Search:

locking—9x forward, 7x reverse

Fast Forward/Rewind Time:
approx. 8 min. for P6-120

Remote Pause: through optional synchro edit cord

Remote Control: stores in cassette compartment door—IR with buttons for rewind/search, play, fast forward/search, pause,

stop, record with safety, title on/off, title shift forward and reverse, A/V dub, synchro edit/review, self-timer, camcorder start/stop, tele and wide

Counter Digits:
5—hrs:mins:secs.

Audio: hi-fi AFM stereo
Graphics: 24

Special Features: still frame, insert edit (A/V dub), counter memory, second clock, digital zoom to 64x, program auto exposure, flying erase head, elapsed time, time remaining, slim and wide modes

Absent Features:
external mic jack, earphone jack, indexing, digital memory

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution:
240-250 lines

S/N Ratios (dB):
video—unweighted 42.5,

HIGHLIGHTS

With the VM-E25A, Hitachi brings its successful twist-and-shoot concept to 8mm—twisting the camcorder into shooting position turns on the power and slides away an integral lens cover. Its tiny chassis is packed with a 64x digital zoom, fuzzy logic autofocus and exposure, a concealed remote control and a new digital effect that squeezes or widens an image. Picture quality and ease of use are good to very good, audio quality is good and overall performance is good to very good. It has a few operational quirks, and its \$1,300 price is a little high, but its extra features make it very appealing.

weighted 48.6; chroma AM—42.5; chroma PM—38.2

Audio Frequency Response:
50 Hz-15 kHz, -3 dB;
-5.7 dB at 20 Hz and
-4.9 dB at 20 kHz

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range:
67.3 dB

Audio Distortion: 0.3%
RATINGS

Picture:
good/very good

Audio: good
Ease of Use:
good/very good

Overall: good/very good

the VM-E25A assumes a shape similar to that of a conventional subcompact. This motion uncovers the lens and sets the camcorder to camera mode, and places the zoom and run/stop controls in their normal positions.

A button near the zoom rocker gives ■ choice of zoom modes. Zoom 1 allows ■ 2x digital extension of the optical 8x zoom, up to 16x. The zoom 2 mode provides an 8x digital extension, to 64x. At all zoom settings over 8x, a zoom meter in the viewfinder tells you the current magnification. Zoom ranges over 12x require use of ■ tripod for steady pictures.

Wide and slim modes are available from the zoom 2 mode. Wide mode stretches images horizontally by about 20 percent, while slim mode compresses images by the same amount. This last feature may be useful with upcoming 16:9 widescreen TV sets that will digitally expand images to produce widescreen pictures. Both can be used for comic or artistic effects.

Folding the camcorder for shooting reveals controls along its top. These include camera controls, such as autofocus on/off and powered manual focus near and far. On the beveled top left edge sit VCR controls. Fast forward and rewind double as edit search controls. An eject button, a camera/VCR mode selector and ■ review button sit nearby.

A stereo microphone and ■ covered multipin audio/video/synchro edit port occupy the front. On the rear are a compartment for the clock/memory battery and grooves for the main battery.

Opening the cassette door reveals ■ button that ejects a credit-card-sized remote control. The remote carries a full set of VCR transport controls, like play and stop, plus start/stop, zoom and titler buttons. It has a few controls not on the camcorder, like synchro edit and A/V dub.

The titler calls up 24 color graphics, including a vertical curtain that may be superimposed in three positions, and various event graphics—a birthday cake, Christmas bells, a heart and others. The titler may be operated from the camcorder or the remote, but it won't let you create your own graphics as most camcorders can.

The twist-and-shoot design makes using the camcorder easy. It offers manual focus and shutter speed selection, but white balance, iris and BLC remain under fuzzy logic control. The remote can be tricky—the user must be careful to turn it the right way before inserting it into the cassette door, or it may jam, which could mean taking it to a repairman for removal. Occasionally, the camcorder's electronics freeze up. The user can restore normal operation by removing both the battery and the clock bat-

tery for a few seconds. Unfortunately, this returns the camcorder to its factory settings—the user must reset the time, date and camera adjustments. In spite of these hazards, ease of operation is good to very good.

Picture quality is good to very good, and audio quality is good, both about what we expect from an 8mm camcorder in its price range. The digital zoom provides no increase in detail—in-

dividual pixels are magnified, so resolution drops and edges may be fuzzy. This effect, noticeable in all digital zooms, is increased as the room ratio increases—especially above 30x—and is more apparent in the wide mode. Our overall rating is good to very good. But for two operational quirks, the VM-E25A is an interesting, practical combination of mechanical and digital video technologies. ■

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- Unified remote unit controls most JVC televisions and VCRs.
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IMPORTANT
Although the Unified Remote Control unit is compatible with most JVC TVs and JVC VCRs, as well as many TVs and VCRs from other manufacturers, it is possible that the Unified Remote Control will not work with your TV or VCR or in some instances will provide only certain functions.

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CAMCORNER

Sharpen your skills with a touch of class

BY JIM SULSKI

When Steve Hotvedt decided to improve his home video skills, he enlisted the help of the professional videographers he found at the Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco. "I learned basic techniques that made a world of difference," said the 44-year-old Hotvedt. "Simple things, like shielding a microphone from the wind. I also find I've become more careful about the way I set up a shot, and composition and flow of action have become more important."

Hotvedt is one of thousands of amateur videographers who are ditching uninspired instruction manuals for live teachers. With camcording turning into a national hobby, video classes are proliferating. Whether you're a beginner or nearly a professional, video classes are available at a variety of facilities, not all of them obvious. These include media access centers, community colleges, public access facilities for cable TV, adult education centers, even professional production houses. Open to anyone, their offerings range from day-long workshops to accredited sessions lasting several weeks. While the most advanced classes may cost several hundred dollars, many cost less than \$100.

Finding a local video training site can be as simple as making a phone call. For example, to reach your neighborhood's cable public access facility, simply call your cable company. If you don't subscribe to cable, call your municipality for the name of the firm. Community colleges and adult education classes are usually listed in the phone book under "Schools." When you reach a school, ask for the adult education department.

Media access centers are a bit harder to find. One comprehensive source is

the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers, which publishes a guide to member organizations around the country. The NAMAC guide is available for \$20 to non-members (call 510-451-2717). As an example of the wealth of training resources available, we rounded up five of the most respected:

- *The Center for New Television* in Chicago is offering more than 20 classes this fall and winter, ranging from one-day workshops to six-week courses. Re-

comparing camcorder formats and a class called "Professional Results From Consumer Video Cameras." Fees vary; call 415-861-3282.

- *The Visual Studies Workshop Media Center* in Rochester, New York, offers dozens of basic and advanced classes. Fees vary; call 716-442-8676.

- In New York City, *Film/Video Arts* is a 23-year-old organization that offers 50 workshops a year. Fees vary; call 212-673-9261.

Most facilities offer a basic course for beginners, covering the rudiments of camcorder and VCR operation, audio, lighting, framing and composition. Such classes not only help students learn the difference between a pan and a dolly, but the language of video, "how to think about shooting in terms of editing," explains Ida Jeter of the Center for New Television. "Basic classes also help students overcome basic pitfalls," adds Mona Jimenez of the Visual Studies Workshop. "For example, how to eliminate audio buzzing by simply turning off fluorescent lights or not plugging a camcorder into the same outlet as the refrigerator."

More advanced classes can be a living alternative to an owner's manual. The kind of training that's available delves deep into the nuances of computer graphics, lighting and studio production. Such classes also offer access to equipment way beyond the budgets of most enthusiasts. You can edit with state-of-the-art video systems, or rent or borrow otherwise unattainable camcorders.

Apart from skills, training also widens students' video horizons. "The whole point about the medium is the editing," says David Bolt, executive director of the Bay Area Video Coalition. "Plenty of videographers develop a good

continued on page 118



cent workshops include "Getting the Most From Your Camcorder" and "Putting Your Family History on Tape." Fees vary; call 312-951-6868.

- *Quote...Unquote Inc.*, the public access facility for Albuquerque, New Mexico, offers about 40 classes each year and charges \$15 per class. Call 505-243-0027.

- San Francisco's *Bay Area Video Coalition* holds nearly 100 seminars and workshops each year, covering topics that range from production basics to interactive videodisc development. Recent sessions have included workshops

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GR-AX10U
MINI COMPACT VHS CAMCORDER



GR-SX90U
COMPACT S-VHS
HI-FI STEREO CAMCORDER



GR-303U
COMPACT VHS CAMCORDER



GR-S505U
COMPACT S-VHS
HI-FI STEREO CAMCORDER

VHS: The Universal Video Language

JVC
THE INVENTOR OF VHS

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

How to pick the perfect satellite receiver

BY ROBERT ANGUS

So you think your home theater has it all—a combi player, an S-VHS VCR, a 35-inch high-resolution monitor and a surround-sound system. Maybe you even have theater seats and a popcorn machine, but unless you have a satellite system, you're missing something. The fact is, satellite TV is the best picture you can get short of laserdisc, and far better than conventional TV broadcasts.

Because of the need for a dish eight to 10 feet or more in diameter, the pleasures of satellite TV have been limited largely to viewers in the suburbs or in the sticks. But small-dish satellite is on the way. In fact, viewers in some parts of the country can receive many programs on four-foot dishes.

If you've decided to take the plunge into satellite (or dump that 10-year-old clunker system in favor of a full-featured one), the place to start is with a satellite receiver. Most of today's receivers can handle both the present-day channels that require large dishes and signals from the yet-to-come small-dish satellites. Virtually all come with descramblers built in. And most have dropped the made-on-the-kitchen-table look of yesteryear for styling that fits in perfectly with the rest of your equipment.

As receivers' looks, performance and function have improved, prices have risen. Today, a simple starter receiver costs from \$750 to \$1,200. A better unit will run you \$1,400 to \$1,800 and a full-featured top-of-the-line model costs \$2,000 or more. If you're a do-it-yourself type and the only one in your household likely to be using the receiver, you may be able to make do with a low-priced model. But if other members of the family are likely to be using it, you'd be well-advised to spend more. Higher-priced receivers may not deliver better pictures than starter units, but they invariably are easier to use, and more likely to include such desirable features as stereo digital audio output.

Don't even consider a satellite receiver that doesn't include a VideoCipher II Plus descrambler. You'll need it to receive any of the 70 or so cable channels you may care to subscribe to (another 100 or more are available free of charge). Likewise, make sure that the receiver is capable of receiving both C and Ku bands. The former requires a large dish and offers the most popular cable and satellite programs. The latter covers the frequency range where small-dish and direct-broadcast satellite programs will be available.

Your system will require a positioner to move the antenna from one satellite to another. You can buy it separately or

as part of a complete receiver, even in economy models like Radio Shack's Memorex SR 2014. Most economy receivers come with infrared remote controls, as do virtually all costlier units. The most expensive, like the Chapparral Monterey 90 and Uniden 4800, also incorporate a UHF remote so that you can change satellites or channels and make other adjustments from virtually any room in the house.

Memory is the element that separates low-cost units that are relatively difficult to use from top-of-the-line models that virtually program themselves. The limited memory in units like the HTS Tracker IV or the Drake 1024 remembers where most or all of the satellites are (so that you don't have to hunt every time you switch from one to another), and may allow you to program some favorite channels. It also lets you prevent the kids from watching X-rated fare or the babysitter from running up a pay-per-view tab.

More memory, like in the Houston Tracker V or the Panasonic PS 700EX, allows you to store information on lots more satellites and channels, including those that have non-standard audio. These receivers also let you store audio-only channels, of which there are at least 80, embracing a wide variety of music and talk formats.

The most sophisticated units, such as the Toshiba TRX 2200 or the General Instrument 2750R, allow you to select programming not just by satellite and channel number, but also by channel name and program category. Top-of-the-line models like the Uniden 4800 feature program guides that automatically position the dish and receiver for the program you want to watch. You don't even have to know what channel or satellite it's on or the name of the programmer.

Onscreen display, available these days on all premium-priced models, most midpriced units and even some starter receivers, makes channel selection easy.

Satellite audio, as broadcast by pro-

continued on page 103



Satellite Simplified: Toshiba's TRX 2200 lets users select programs by category or channel name.

PERHAPS THE BEST WAY TO EXPLAIN THE NEW PHILIPS COMPACT DISC INTERACTIVE SYSTEM IS TO EXPLAIN WHAT IT'S NOT.

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What you're looking at is not a CD. Well, not exactly. It's actually a new kind of CD called a CD-I. You've probably already read that CD-I's were coming. And you probably already know that CD-I stands for Compact Disc Interactive. What you may not know is that just one 5" disc can contain the combined works of Shakespeare, Dickens and Mark Twain. It can bring to life the paintings and photographs of the great museums of the world. And it can enable your children to exercise their creativity by using television as an interactive educational tool. CD-I technology is not like anything you've seen or heard before. And the possibilities it creates are, truly, limited only by your imagination.

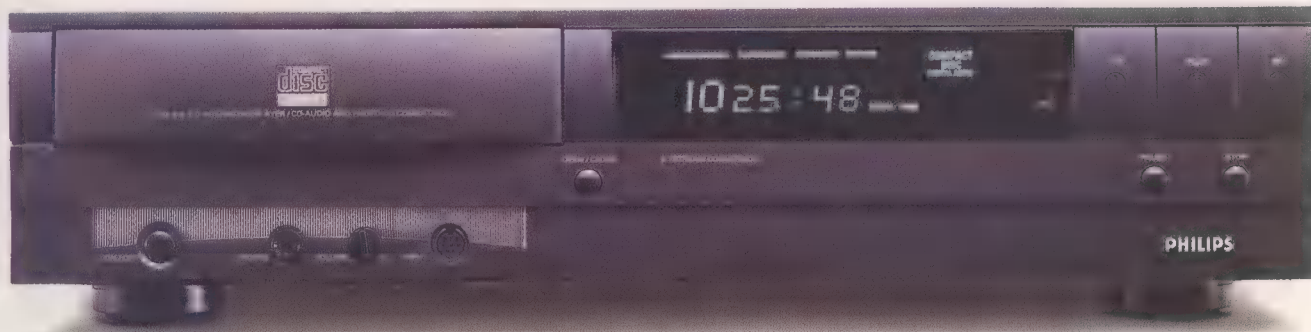


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When the engineers at Philips figured out how to turn an audio signal into a series of digital impulses, a format was born that provided an everlasting alternative to the LP. Of course, what can be done to an audio signal can be done to a video signal as well. Thus, the advent of CD-I.

A combination of both technologies, the Imagination Machine is greater than the sum of its parts. As a CD player, it provides stunning musical clarity thanks to Philips "Bitstream processing." And, as a CD-I player, it creates an exciting new world of interac-

tive audio/video, animated graphics and text. A world you can manipulate and control.

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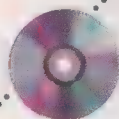
Imagine hearing an ABC golf announcer comment on the great chip shot you just made from your easy chair.

Imagine it's Saturday morning and, instead of watching cartoons, your kids are creating their own.

*The Imagination Machine remote
is nothing like the one
you have at home.*



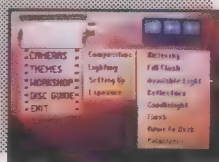
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something you experience.



**Time-Life
Photography
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**Sandy's
Circus**



Push a button on the "Time-Life Photography" CD-I disc and you will find yourself at the table of contents of an entire 10 volume series on photography.



Utilizing the full advantages of CD-Interactive technology, the disc features a unique camera simulator which lets you actually experience taking pictures.



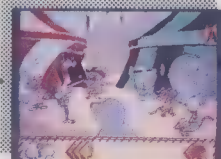
You adjust for exposure. You correct for lighting. You focus. You shoot. In seconds you actually see how the picture would turn out. Too dark? Adjust your f-stop and try again.



Push "Make A Movie" on the "Sandy's Circus" CD-I disc and your children become their own writers and directors, creating cartoons that let their imaginations run wild.



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HANDS ON TEST

Camcorders have hundreds of uses—recording memorable times, documenting important events, capturing life's humorous moments—but only if you have one in hand. I've often been in situations where I wished I had a camcorder, but had left it behind because I didn't want a heavy object hanging from my shoulder.

When I picked up Sony's new 8mm CCD-TR51, with its reduced dimensions and light weight (1.3 pounds), I realized the problem has been solved. Just as 35mm point-and-shoots let you always keep a camera in reach, the TR51 makes it easy to keep a camcorder handy.

Small enough to fit in a parka pocket, the \$1,200 TR51 packs a useful array of features, including a 6x zoom lens with a steady, lightning-quick inner autofocus system and an auto macro feature. It has stereo audio with an external microphone jack, a world clock with daylight-saving time adjustment, time/date recording and title superimposer. Like point-and-shoot cameras, it has a sturdy, integral sliding lens shield that can't come loose like conventional lens caps, further encouraging the user to tuck the TR51 into a pocket.

The TR51's controls are as practical as its size, designed for fast, simple operation without interrupting shooting. For example, the fader is underneath the lens, where it's easy to locate by touch without stopping to look. The autofocus and backlight compensation controls are nearby.

Beyond take-along convenience, the TR51's compact chassis attracts much less attention in the field than larger units—action is less likely to stop or shift in response to its presence. The viewfinder rotates 90 degrees upward, allowing an operator to cradle the TR51 at chest level. Looking down into the eyepiece, with the TR51 all but hidden by arms and body, gives the user a very low profile.

A wireless remote control, barely larger than a matchbook, facilitates editing and makes it possible to discreetly

BY TY HARRINGTON

CCD-TR51

*A flyweight 8mm
for video to go*



Under Cover: Sony's CCD-TR51 has a sturdy, integral lens cover that's impossible to lose.

operate the zoom lens and other controls at distances up to 50 feet.

The trick with the TR51 is the handling. Naturally, the smaller the unit, the more susceptible it is to erratic camcorder motion. But I found that there are nearly always cars, trees, telephone poles and other sturdy structures to brace the TR51 against. When I couldn't find anything to hold it against, I found that locking my elbows against my torso and exercising careful breathing control worked quite well. Over the long haul, the light weight reduces fatigue and actually promotes steady shooting.

I became so attached to the TR51 that it was with me always—in the car, in restaurants, even at the supermarket. There were so many great shots I would never have caught without it, like a waiter's bawdy humor and an enormous tower of soft paper towels toppling on an eight-year-old running after his brother. Sitting in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City with the TR51 resting on the arm of the pew, I was for the first time able to tape inside a church, during a service, without anyone seeming to notice. And no one complained when I deftly videoed from my side while visiting my 95-year-old grandmother at nursing home.

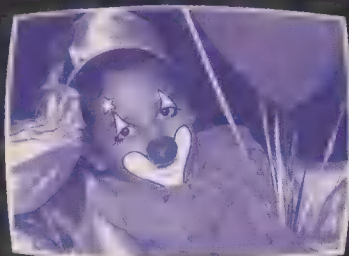
It's true that many larger camcorders have features the TR51 lacks, but because it's so handy and so inconspicuous, I'm tempted to make it my camcorder of choice, or at least to own one as a second camcorder so I'll never have to leave home without video. ■



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Panasonic introduces the **FX Generator**. It can change your coloring, texture, background, and even your mind about home videos.

For everyone whose imagination keeps going after the camera stops rolling, Panasonic introduces the new FX Generator.

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You can strobe or make an image mosaic. Paint it, freeze it, or squeeze it. Then give it a more professional look by color correcting, superimposing and scrolling titles, and adding shadowing and edging.



STROBE

Add an optional character generator to create up to 10 pages of video titles, dates, times, and a stopwatch.

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Put it all together and you'll see that with Panasonic, you'll have a whole new way to view home videos.



To speak to a Panasonic FX Generator dealer nearest you, call **1-800-365-1515, ext. 789**.

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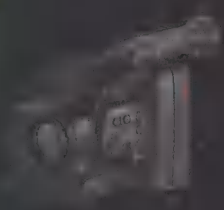
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Q&A

BY RODERICK WOODCOCK

How to delete a date, splice an S-cable and compare S-VHS with VHS



Counter Cover-Up: A date/time stamp can be concealed with a special-effects generator (center) or a computer digitizer and genlock (right).

Q I videotaped my daughter's birthday party but accidentally left the date and time stamp on. Now I'm stuck with the readout throughout the tape, and it's distracting. Is there any way of getting rid of it?

William Ferris
San Diego, California

A You can obliterate the readout in three ways, none elegant. One is to place a special-effects generator (such as Azden's VPC-10) between the camcorder and the VCR and make a copy of the tape, using the generator's wipe feature to cover the date with a colored bar. If the area is too hard to match, you can add a bar on top and bottom for a letterbox effect.

The second method, which is much more expensive, is to take the tape to a professional postproduction house and have them digitally sample a piece of each scene and electronically paste it over the readout. Networks use this technique to cover up the numerical time code that often finds its way into their tapes.

You can accomplish the same thing, albeit more crudely, with a computer that has genlocking, digitizing and NTSC output capabilities. A typical setup would comprise a Commodore Amiga, an AmiGen genlock, a NewTek DigiView digitizer and a color splitter. Digitize a frame from a scene, and use the brush tool from a paint program such as NewTek's DigiPaint 3 to crop out a piece of the frame next to the readout. Then

paste the piece over the readout. Obviously, this works best when the readout covers a simple background, such as a wall, and when there's little camera motion in the scene.

Q I know S-VHS offers 60 percent more horizontal resolution than standard VHS in SP mode, but what about other methods of recording? How does S-VHS EP compare to VHS SP? Does an S-VHS master dubbed to VHS equal or exceed VHS masters made directly in the camcorder? For VHS recording, is S-VHS tape better than premium-quality VHS tape?

Jim Doreck
Seaside, California

A Based on my experience with more than a dozen S-VHS decks in four years, S-VHS EP displays more resolution and sharpness than standard VHS at SP. I often record six or eight hours of TV programming in S-VHS EP, dubbing things I want to save to library tapes in S-VHS SP. In both S-VHS and VHS, SP is clearly superior to EP, owing to wider track widths and significantly fewer dropouts.

I believe an S-VHS original dubbed to VHS will equal or exceed the quality of an original VHS master, and will be clearly better than VHS copied to VHS. Using S-VHS tape for VHS master recordings isn't a bad idea, but in this case, it won't significantly outperform premium VHS tape.

Q Does anyone make inline splices for Y/C cables? I have two or three short ones, and would like to join them together. I know longer cables are available, but they're expensive.

Arthur Clark
Santa Barbara, California

A I'm not aware of any inline splices specifically made for Y/C cables, but here's a hint that Macintosh computer owners (like me) discovered a few years ago when the Y/C specification was set. It turns out that the pin placement for Macintosh's ADB keyboard cables is almost identical to that for Y/C cables. The only visible difference is the slight metal "V" bulge on Y/C cables, designed to help align the cables for insertion.

Inline splices for Macintosh ADB cables cost \$5 to \$10 at computer stores. But long, inexpensive Y/C cables are also available from companies such as Recoton, so I recommend you track them down.

Incidentally, while Mac ADB cables can suffice as Y/C cables, don't try using Y/C cables on a Mac because the ADB circuit is far more delicate than the Y/C circuits used in VCRs. ■

Video Magazine welcomes your questions. Please include a phone number, but not a return envelope as the volume of mail does not permit replies. All letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address queries to Q & A, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

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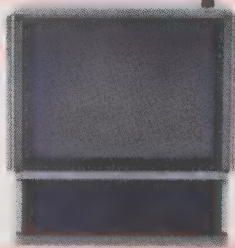
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EDITED BY BRIAN CLARK

NEW PRODUCTS



Memorex debuts slimmed-down camcorder

Memorex's Model 127 VHS camcorder has a narrow body and weighs just 3.8 pounds. Iris control and white balance are automatic. A backlight/gain-up control helps in tough shooting conditions. Editing features include a flying erase head, insert edit, index recording, blank search, a digital tape counter with memory and forward/reverse video search and freeze frame.

Price: \$999.

For additional information, circle No. 132 on Reader Service Card.



Hi-fi deck heads Sylvania's VCR line

Sylvania's top-of-the-line VCR is the VC4360, which features hi-fi stereo sound and contains an MTS/SAP decoder to receive and record TV stereo and SAP broadcasts. The four-head design permits still and slow-motion special effects. The VHS machine allows onscreen control of programming, VCR setup, and clock and calendar setting. The cable-ready tuner can receive up to 155 channels.

Price: \$499.95.

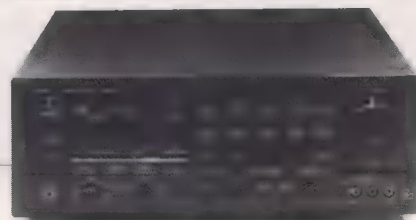
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Luxman introduces powerful receiver

Luxman's RV-371 Pro-Logic audio/video receiver has Dolby Pro-Logic surround-sound capability. The front channels are rated at 70 watts, while center and rear are 50 watts per channel. Front-panel jacks include one for S-video. Eleven audio and video inputs are available.

Price: \$1,400.

For additional information, circle No. 131
on Reader Service Card.





Laser karaoke brings the sing-along home

Pioneer is introducing laser karaoke players for home use, and with more than 1,000 karaoke songs available, everyone should be able to find some favorites. The CLD-V820 is a combi player as well, and can remove vocal tracks from most CDs. Music levels can be adjusted to match the key of a singer's voice. Laser karaoke discs contain music, backing vocals, video and onscreen lyrics.

Price: \$1,000.

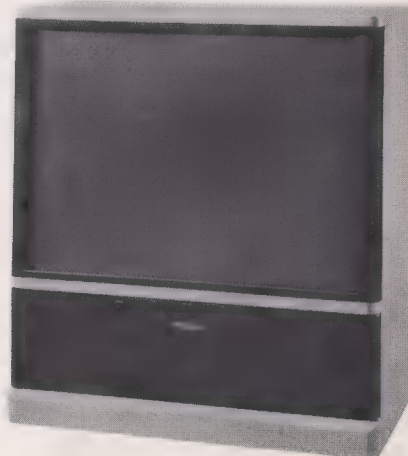
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Panasonic offers 51-inch projection set

Panasonic's 51-inch PTP-5186S projection television produces more than 700 lines of resolution. The set has surround-sound circuitry and dbx noise reduction, along with variable audio outputs for additional speakers. The included pair of speakers are each rated at 10 watts. The inset of the picture-in-picture feature can be either 14 or 18 inches, and can be freeze-framed or switched with the main picture. The audio also can be swapped.

Price: \$2,999.95.

For additional information, circle No. 135 on Reader Service Card.



Surround speakers meet THX specifications

Cambridge SoundWorks has introduced THX-certified surround-sound speakers for home theaters. Dubbed "The Surround," the speakers send higher octaves out the side of the cabinet, contributing to the surround effect.

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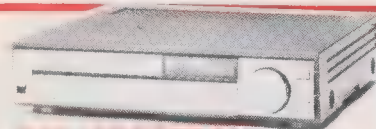
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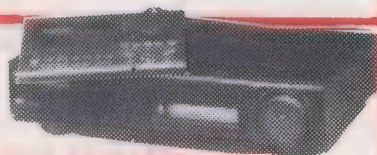
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STATE OF THE ART

TOMORROW

Art from science's frontier

BY STEVE DITLEA

Visits to synthetic worlds of pulsating lattices. Swirls of color that make '60s psychedelia seem dreary. Vivid representations of scientific principles never before animated. These eye-catching visualizations—dazzling products of the computer graphics revolution—are made by scientists to explore the outer limits of their knowledge. And you won't find them for rent at your local video store, or on MTV.

Until recently, access to these and many similarly striking videos was limited to other scientists, professionals and attendees of events like the annual SIGGRAPH (Special Interest Group Graphics) conference. When such tapes were available to the public, they were extremely costly or offered through obscure channels. But all this has changed with the appearance of an adventurous catalog, *Computers in Science & Art*, from Media Magic (Box 507, Nicasio, CA 94946; 415-662-2426), a firm better known for its *New Visions* catalog of New Age music.

The latest *Science & Art* catalog, which also offers books, describes several dozen unique, science-oriented videos, all on VHS, with a few titles also on laserdisc. Almost half were compiled especially for the catalog. Media Magic founder Michael Strasmich says his goal is to broaden the audience for an emerging medium he calls "science as art," which is about "synthesizing science, esthetics and entertainment." Viewers don't need scientific backgrounds to appreciate such videos, Strasmich contends, since "science and art now overlap." They will need curiosity, however, and perhaps a sense of wonder: Some of the tapes are as brief as 15 minutes and light on technical explication.

But their content is hypnotically beautiful and virtually unavailable elsewhere. For example, you don't need to understand fractals, a branch of mathematics that can model the patterns of fern leaves or the shapes of coastlines, to be struck by the haunting beauty of frac-



Frozen Moments: Computer-generated scenes from (top down) *Spacetime Visualization*, *Rock Art, Vol 1: The Moody Blues* and *The Conquest of Form*.

tal animation. The catalog's fractal offerings reflect Strasmich's own fascination with the subject, which began in 1987 with *Fractal Fantasy* (\$15), a tape he edited and for which he composed electronic music.

Gathering examples of the mandala-like forms generated by supercomputers, Media Magic also offers state-of-the-art fractals in *The Fractal Universe* (\$30) and *Mandelbrot Sets and Julia Sets* (\$35). For those with a yen for psychedelia, *Rock Art* (\$20), produced by Aeon

continued on page 100

AUDIO INPUT

Dbx vs. RCA: The MTS shouting match

BY MARTIN BROCHSTEIN

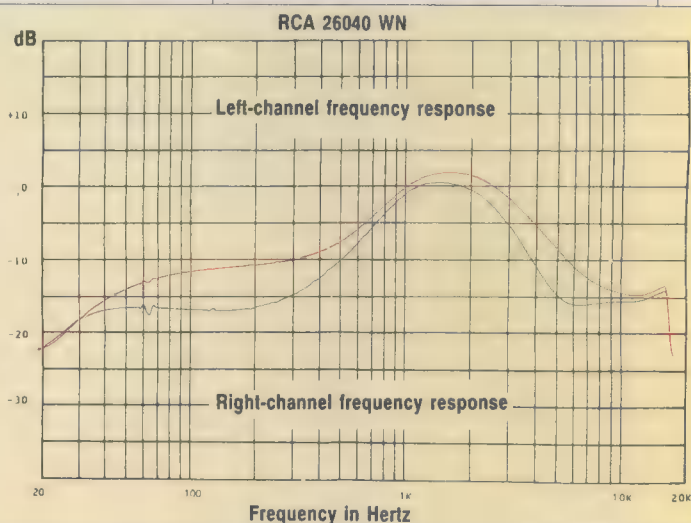
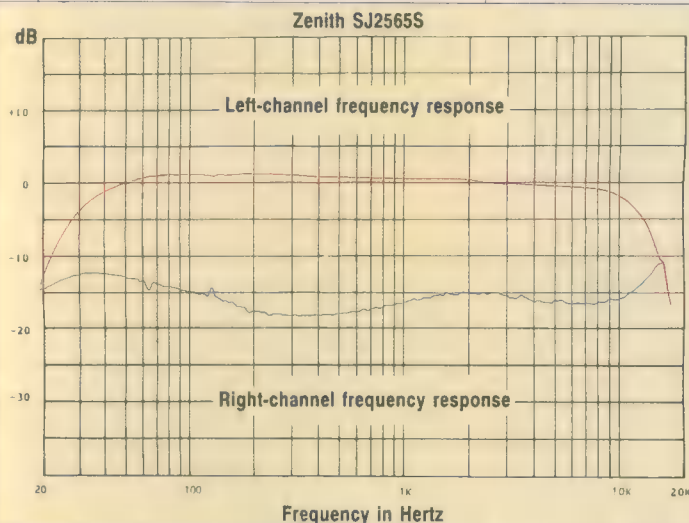
What is stereo TV? It's probably not a question you've thought much about. Most videophiles assume that the wide sound imaging coming through a stereo TV or VCR tuner is by definition a reproduction of the stereo signal. But a minor brouhaha has arisen within the consumer electronics industry about whether all sets marked as stereo should indeed be carrying the label. In the cen-

VCR industries. More than 32 percent of the 20.8 million color TV sets sold in 1990 were capable of receiving a stereo signal. Through the first nine months of 1991, the percentage had risen to 37 percent, and shows every indication of continuing its steady climb well into the future.

Stereo TV seemingly was conceived in a bowl of alphabet soup. In 1983, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved a Multichannel TV

the FCC only has jurisdiction over broadcasting—it has no power over the reception end. Therein lies the dispute.

At its core is the fact that there's no true technical definition of the word "stereo." The most commonly cited criterion for stereo sound is a minimum separation of 15 to 20 decibels throughout the listening range. But there actually isn't a concrete standard. James Gatman, general manager of TV product management for Thomson, calls



Separation Anxiety: These charts show the difference in stereo separation between a Zenith TV set with a dbx MTS decoder and an RCA set with a non-dbx decoder. The upper line represents pink noise fed through the left channel of an MTS encoder into each set. The lower line shows leakage of

the noise into the right channel of each set. The further apart the lines, the greater the separation between stereo channels. The Zenith set achieves 13 to 19 decibels of separation, while the RCA set produces a maximum of 7 dB separation.

ter ring are dbx Technology Licensing, descendant of the company that invented the dbx noise-reduction system, and Thomson Consumer Electronics, which makes and markets TV sets under the RCA and GE brands. The story of their dispute says as much about the realities of business as it does about questions of technology.

Riding the growing appetite for home theater components, stereo has become a major element of the TV and

Sound (MTS) system proposed by the Broadcast Television Systems Committee (BTSC) of the Electronic Industries Association (EIA) in conjunction with the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB).

MTS is a broadcast standard that includes companding (signal compressing/expanding) technology developed by dbx, a noted developer of noise-reduction circuitry. The stereo signal is dbx-encoded at the transmitter or cable headend for eventual dbx decoding at the receiver. In most stereo TV sets and VCRs, that's exactly what happens. But

stereo is "psychoacoustic phenomenon" that isn't necessarily measurable through normal testing. Dbx begs to differ.

Dbx officials say they became aware within the past year that certain low-priced stereo TV sets from Thomson, Sharp and Philips don't include dbx decoders. Most of these companies' stereo sets do indeed have dbx decoders, for which dbx is paid a royalty that averages about a dime per set. But certain low-end models use other circuitry, which produces less stereo separation than

continued on page 122

Martin Brochstein is senior editor of Television Digest.

ADVERTISING Laser Update SUPPLEMENT

LaserDiscs: The Ultimate Collectible

Videophiles turn to LaserDiscs for the best in audio and video programming.

APPLE COMPUTER COFOUNDER Steve Wozniak has long been a technical visionary. However, these days his visions are being supplied by LaserDiscs — those 12-inch optical videodiscs that have become the primary source of his home entertainment as well as the focus of a prized and growing movie collection.

Thousands of LaserDiscs are played back in rooms throughout his house in the foothills of the Santa Cruz mountains by Wozniak and his kids. Then there is the collection — an additional 2,000 discs in total — that remain untouched, collector's items that are still in their original, shrink-wrapped condition and alphabetized behind locked cabinet doors.

"I've always been interested in movies," he told a GQ magazine columnist. "Even before there was the Betamax, I had home VCRs and satellite TV. Then when LaserDisc came out, the specs just floored me. I just saw it as a winning technology."

With LaserDiscs, consumers can

enjoy digital sound on par with the compact disc along with picture quality that is a full 60 percent sharper than ordinary videotape. Special effects such as slow motion and freeze frame, and extensive programming and random access of frames and chapters are some of the features that attract a growing number of video buyers to the LaserDisc format.

Meanwhile, machines that play both sides of discs have made the format more convenient for movie viewing. Longer playing CLV discs are now widely available and new machines are able to play them with the highest quality special effects. New combination disc players that play LaserDiscs as well as the popular audio-only compact disc have increased the marketplace for optical disc audio and video, with the number of players having doubled over the last few years.

Hardware development notwithstanding, it is the LaserDisc programming that originally drew Wozniak to the format. "The ability to study the films and see them the way they were meant to be seen is what I really like," he relates.

Not surprisingly, LaserDisc programmers like Pioneer LDCA

have led the way in providing LaserDisc owners with the widest variety of quality programming, offering films in their original widescreen aspect ratio as well as the pan and scan alternative. LaserDisc suppliers have also managed to locate lost film footage and have scouted out top-quality masters from which to duplicate their platters. In some cases, supplementary narration, storyboards and other collectible materials have been added to the programs to appeal to the interests of the LaserDisc audience that tends to be more serious about their movies than the average videotape renter.

It's no wonder that collectors like Wozniak consider LaserDiscs to be such a prized possession. Unlike home videotapes that deteriorate over time, LaserDiscs do not degrade or wear out with repeated play. Movies that have been restored to their original roadshow quality become more than just home entertainment; they become documents for posterity.

Viewers simply get more from the LaserDisc format — in terms of quality and content. One example, the VIDEO Magazine VIVA award-winning "The Godfather Collector's Edition," includes all three installments of the Francis Ford Coppola film classic, and has been further enhanced with a unique collector's program, "The Godfather Family: A Look Inside." This disc, which is not being sold separately, contains behind-the-scenes and rehearsal footage, actor/actress

Pioneer LDCA has led the way in providing LaserDisc owners with the widest variety of quality programming.



interviews and excerpts from the director's archives. It is an example of the type of video exclusives that are made available to LaserDisc owners.

In fact, these limited edition box sets have spawned a subculture of disc collectors who pay enormous sums to fill out their collections. One collector is now offering \$6,000 for "The Star Trek Gift Set" #1701. This limited edition collector's set, which includes all five Paramount Pictures' "Star Trek" films, was released last summer in the widescreen format. At the same time, Pioneer also issued the restored color pilot of the television episode "Star Trek: The Cage," which includes color footage believed to have been destroyed from Gene Roddenberry's classic television series.

However enticing LaserDisc collectibles may be, the fact remains that LaserDisc provides its audience with the same hit movies — and at the same times — as the mass market videocassette alternative. When Paramount Pictures released "Ghost" last year, it was the most successful initial shipment of any film title in the history of the LaserDisc format. Madonna's "Blond Ambition" tour disc broke ground last year by becoming available on LaserDisc before it was available on videotape; and it is still exclusively available on LaserDisc. More recently, the Madonna concert documentary "Truth or Dare" offered the superior quality of LaserDisc digital audio and video. And "Terminator 2," which was released on tape to the rental market only, was issued for sale before Christmas on LaserDisc in both the pan and scan and widescreen versions; a special limited edition T-2 box set was also released in the widescreen CAV format that allows more critical viewing in all playback and special effects modes.

With more than 6,000 LaserDisc titles to choose from, even diehard film buffs like Steve Wozniak are having trouble keeping their collection fully stocked. "I find myself going to the store and buying them by the armful," he says.



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BEST PRODUCTS OF THE YEAR

What does it take to be a video visionary? Part of the answer is easy: Simply create a product or a program that transcends the ordinary. But in the diverse, technologically racing culture of video, there's no shortage of candidates. That's why the hard part of the answer is identifying the best from among the many worthy contenders.

Last year, we initiated the ViVA Gold! awards to do just that: ViVA, for Visions in Video Award. This year ViVA Gold! returns. In the accompanying pages, you'll see *Video Magazine's* selections for 1991's best equipment and programs. The 10 best in each category receive ViVA Gold! awards, to be presented at this month's Consumer Electronics Show in Las

Vegas. The remaining 15 products and 10 tapes and discs receive ViVA award designations.

To distinguish the very best from 1991's entries, our editors and contributors debated long and hard. The year was notable both for the variety and the inventiveness of its products. Some displayed original features, like interchangeable lenses, or refinements, like new TV tube shapes, or ingenious approaches to familiar tasks. A few even demonstrated entirely new ways to use video.

What counted most? Innovation, excellence in performance—and finally, each candidate's impact on the way we shoot, edit, record and even see the world around us through the medium of video.



VIVA GOLD! AWARD

BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH

'91's Top Hardware



From thousands of video products introduced each year, we select several hundred of the best for coverage in *Video Magazine*. Now after weeks of deliberation, we've picked the best of the best of '91 for our 1992 ViVA Gold! awards. The 10 products described below represent the video industry's highest achievements in technological innovation, performance and value. They're stellar machines that powerfully illustrate video's vitality and diversity.



PHILIPS CD-I SYSTEM

With its staggering development budget and unfamiliar concept, many expected CD-Interactive to be the consumer electronics industry's answer to *Hudson Hawk*. But a few holes of *Palm Springs Golf* and a few clicks of the shutter in *Time-Life Photography* should make anyone a believer. It's easy to think of this combination of a computer and a CD-ROM drive as a souped-up, \$1,000 videogame, but it's so much more. As you stroll the Smithsonian, delve into dinosaurs or blast a battleship, CD-I makes you feel like part of the action. We can't wait to try out Philips' next round of discs, and to see what innovations Panasonic, Pioneer, Sony and others bring to this exciting new format.





GOLD!

PANASONIC LX-101 COMBI PLAYER

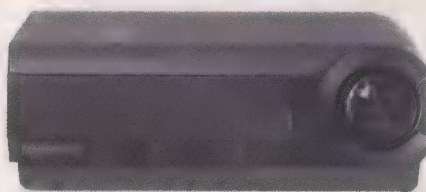
By fusing the guts of its high-end LX-1000 combi player with a no-frills drive mechanism, Panasonic created the first bargain-basement laserdisc player for videophiles. The \$600 LX-101 boasts an S-video output with digital luminance/chrominance separation, a digital timebase corrector for an extra-steady picture, and a MASH one-bit digital-to-analog converter like the ones used in the best Technics CD players. Its CLV



scan mode produces clean, flashing frames, which are much easier on the eyes than the flipping, mutated scan images of most inexpensive combi players. It doesn't have side changing or digital effects, but it puts out a great picture and great sound. And isn't that why you buy a laserdisc player in the first place?

MAGNAVOX LC-1000 LCD PROJECTOR/RECEIVER

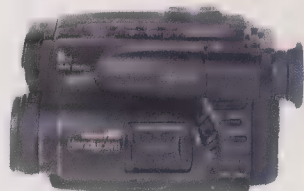
You can't yet buy a video wall like the ones in *Total Recall*, but for \$6,300, you can get the next best thing—Magnavox's LC-1000 LCD video projector. With a tuner and sound system built in,



it's the most hassle-free projector available. Just set it on a bookshelf, plug in an antenna and an audio/video source, and prepare to be amazed. You'll see a picture with realistic color and no visible pixels. And you'll never have to balance on a stepladder for monthly convergence adjustments.

SONY CCD-TR81 Hi8 CAMCORDER

The TR81 is the subcompact we've been waiting for, packing high-resolution recorder and full manual control into a



palm-size package. Building on the successful TR-series formula, Sony added a new inner TTL autofocus that greatly outperforms past designs, as well as a manual focus wheel that feels as smooth as the ones on film camera lenses. A manual iris gives advanced users the exposure control they expect from a Hi8 camcorder. With the TR81, all you lose is sore arms and bulky carrying bags.



SONY KV-29XBR85 29-INCH MONITOR/RECEIVER

We've always loved Sony TVs, but this may be our all-time favorite. A stylish chassis/pedestal combination and a unique screen size almost put it in its own product category. Its picture is competitive with that of any consumer monitor. The pedestal holds a VCR or a laserdisc player, and contains a subwoofer with its own amplifier. For those who simply want a realistic picture without constant tweaking, it's possibly the ideal TV set.

CANON L1 Hi8 CAMCORDER SYSTEM

We knew the VL-mount industry standard for interchangeable lenses would be the genesis of many exciting new camcorders. But we never guessed it would result in such a stunning machine as Canon's L1. With its 15x, 8x and wide-angle 3x zoom lenses, a 2x telephoto converter and a Canon EOS 35mm camera lens mount, the L1 adapts to almost any shooting situation with the twist of a lens barrel. Its tasteful digital effects, stereo zoom microphone and professional feel have made it the camcorder for serious amateur videographers. And pros love it, too—it has found its way into the hands of local news crews, and has even been used to shoot an Esprit clothing commercial.



PANASONIC PRISM SUPERFLAT 31-INCH MONITOR/RECEIVER

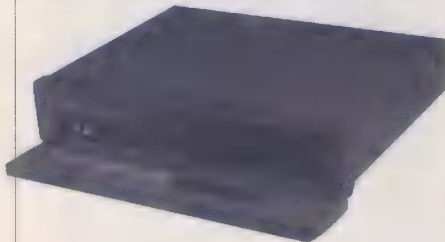
Perhaps the most revolutionary direct-view set since the first Sony Trinitron, Panasonic's SuperFlat is the muscle car of monitors. With a darker face plate and 30 percent less curvature than standard tubes, it produces incredible



contrast and some of the most vivid colors in video. The picture is so different from those we're used to, it makes most other sets seem old-fashioned. And its sound system is one of the best we've ever heard in a direct-view monitor.

MITSUBISHI HS-U65 S-VHS VCR

The U65 is the standout among this year's crop in inexpensive S-VHS VCRs that match their high-end brothers' per-



formance decibel for decibel. We like it better than its competitors because of its outstanding ease of operation, solid chassis, onscreen rewind meter and sophisticated styling. Combined with outstanding picture and sound quality, these features may make it the perfect home theater VCR.

CANON UC1 8mm CAMCORDER

In the quest for compactness, Canon rethought almost every component of the 8mm camcorder. The result is the UC1,



probably the most convenient camcorder to date. Although this sandwich-sized, 1.3-pound wonder goes almost anywhere, it carries more features than many full-size camcorders. Scrolling, wiping and transparency options make its titler one of the most versatile ever. Snap off its attached infrared remote, and you can get in the picture while retaining full control of the camcorder.

LEXICON CP-3 THX SURROUND-SOUND DECODER

Those who think all Dolby Pro-Logic decoders sound the same should change their minds after five minutes with the CP-3. Its THX Cinema mode incorporates subtle enhancements to Pro-Logic,



resulting in a sonic improvement that is anything but subtle. We've tried it with dozens of discs and tapes, and in every one, sound placement was perfect, and we heard new details and surround effects we never knew were there. On-screen menus optimize the CP-3 for almost any speaker setup, listening position, audio source and room size.

1991 ViVA Winners

Although only 10 video products earned ViVA Gold! awards, many more deserve special recognition. The 15 we present below (in no particular order) have captured our attention and fueled our enthusiasm for the field. For innovation and excellence, each merits the ViVA award we present.

SONY MDP-605 COMBI PLAYER

In the effort to make combi players less expensive, manufacturers are substituting stampings for castings and plastic for metal. But like a '57 Chevy, the MDP-605 almost seems to be machined from a solid block of steel. Its disc tray is virtually inflexible, and its smooth opera-

tion is a welcome change from the bumping and grinding many players go through when changing sides.

FUJI F60WIDE 8MM CAMCORDER

Looking more like a weapon than a camcorder, the F60 introduces two remarkably useful features: a pistol grip that also doubles as a mini tripod or a carrying



handle, and an integral wide-angle adapter that slides into place at a touch, without the picture distortion caused by many wide-angle lenses.

PIONEER ELITE PRO-75 45-INCH REAR-PROJECTION MONITOR/RECEIVER

The latest in a long line of outstanding big-screens, the Pro-75 offers an optional contrast screen that saturates colors and gets rid of the annoying scan lines that gave jumbo sets a poor reputation





in the past. The color is just about perfect, the sound is full and smooth, and the jack panel includes every connector you could ever want.



SHARP VL-L50 SLIMCAM VHS CAMCORDER

Inspired by the rising popularity of mini camcorders, Sharp slimmed a full-size VHS chassis into a 2-1/2-inch thick package, creating a camcorder ideal for family fun. At only 3.8 pounds, it goes anywhere you do. When you return, just pop the tape in your VCR and enjoy.



HITACHI VM-E25A 8mm CAMCORDER

This year's most radical subcompact combines a folding chassis with sophisticated electronics, including a 64x digital zoom, special modes that squeeze and expand images, and fuzzy logic control of focus, iris, backlight compensation and shutter speed.

MICROSEARCH CHROMAKEY

This \$400 device inserts computer graphics behind subjects just like much costlier professional units do. With the ChromaKey, a genlock and a Commodore Amiga, you can place yourself anywhere from Marrakesh to Minneapolis,

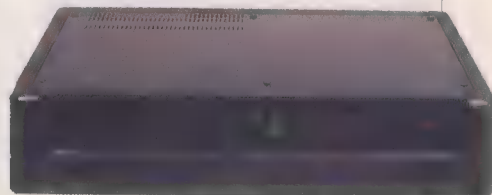
add MTV-style abstract animations to music videos, and put a live video shot of your head on Arnold Schwarzenegger's body. MicroSearch even gives you a blue background sheet and a hilarious demo tape full of ideas to get you started.

PANASONIC PROGRAM DIRECTOR

This remote, included with several new Panasonic VCRs or available separately, is our favorite way to program. Skip the



instructions, and forget about saving the TV listings for codes. Just spin the wheels to the date, time and channel you want. We hope other manufacturers pick up the idea.



SONY SL-HF2100 BETA VCR

How could any Betaphile resist this masterpiece of design? With its illuminated control panel and LCD touch-screen remote, the SL-HF2100 is probably the coolest-looking VCR ever. Anyone who wonders why so many people swear allegiance to a "dead" format should be immediately enlightened upon witnessing the outstanding picture and sound this machine produces from garden-variety videotape.

RCA VR690HF VHS VCR WITH VCR PLUS

VCR programming doesn't get any simpler — this deck's the first to include VCR Plus circuitry, which lets a user timeshift by punching in simple numerical codes from TV listings. An onscreen instruction manual makes it even easier to use. For respectable performance in a user-friendly package, it's tough to beat.

SONY CCD-V801 Hi8 CAMCORDER

With Sony's new RC time code, the V801 offers professional editing at consumer prices. RC time code tags each



frame of video with the hour, minute, second and frame number, which can be read by Sony's RM-E700 editing controller for near-perfect cuts. Third-party manufacturers like Future Video will soon offer RC-compatible gear, too. An advanced exposure system and great picture and sound quality make the V801 ■ winner even without time code.

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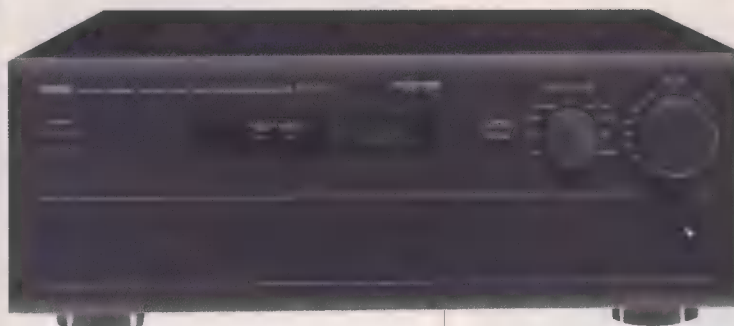


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YAMAHA DSP-A1000 AUDIO/VIDEO AMPLIFIER

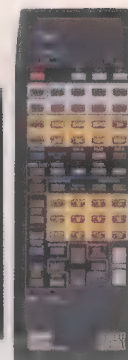
Finally, somebody got it right. Yamaha put 80 watts of clean power in all three front channels of the DSP-A1000, avoiding the distortion and straining caused by the wimpy center channels in most A/V amps. The DSP-A1000 also offers three movie surround modes, from straight Pro-Logic to a 70mm theater mode that uses two additional front speakers for extra ambience.

NEC TURBOEXPRESS HANDHELD VIDEOGAME

The TurboExpress could turn even Supreme Court justices into videogame fanatics. With 16-bit color graphics, it's the hottest handheld available and, by far, our favorite way to play videogames. A TV tuner snaps to the side, so even if you have to wait hours to get your driver's license renewed, you won't miss *Gerald*. Best of all, it uses the same games as NEC's TurboGrafx home system.

JVC HR-S6900U S-VHS VCR

The first under-\$1,000 S-VHS VCR with full editing features, the HR-S6900U sacrifices nothing in performance. Its picture and sound quality are about as good as consumer S-VHS gets, and it includes editing essentials like a jog/shuttle dial, synchro edit and audio insert. With four ambience simulation modes, it also does a great job with rental tapes.



UNIDEN UST 4800 SATELLITE RECEIVER

Uniden's UST 4800 is the first satellite receiver to incorporate an interactive electronic program guide, making it possible to tune a program without reference to a satellite or transponder. The 4800 Super adds an infrared emitter that turns any VCR on and off automatically, facilitating unattended recording from more than one satellite or transponder.



PANASONIC PV-41 VHS-C CAMCORDER

With this camcorder (and its predecessor, the PV-40), Panasonic solves the biggest problem with home video. Its electronic image stabilizer effectively takes the shakes out of one-handed shots. It's a truly useful feature we'd like to see on every camcorder.



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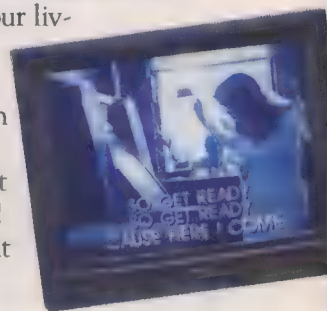
You said you always wanted to sing like a pro. Well, come out of the shower and step up to the mic. The disc player plays regular CDs and LaserDisc movies. The Laser Karaoke puts you on center stage. Singing the lead. With your own professional band and backup singers. Right in your liv-

ing room. Just hook it into your own audio system and TV, and let the show begin!

Go ahead. Belt out those Beach Boys. Jam with Elton John. Croon like Patsy Cline. Ham it up with Hamlish. Emulate Elvis. It's your turn to be the star!

This new combi player plays hundreds of karaoke music video song titles, hits from the '50s through the '80s, all with on-screen lyrics. It can even remove the lead vocals from 70% of all your CDs, so you and your friends can fill in for your favorites in your own velvet tones.

It's from Pioneer, of course. Where your music never sounded more tender and soulful. And the visual laser resolu-



LaserKaraoke™

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The Art of Entertainment

'91's Best Tapes and Discs

VIVA GOLD!

Every year sees its share of noteworthy films making their mark on home video for the very first time, and 1991 is no exception. But this year may well be remembered as the one in which tape and laserdisc distributors raised their work to a whole new level of sophistication. Economic realities and an ever-more-knowledgeable public conspired to create a unique environment for the production of video software. Companies large and small put tremendous effort into acquiring the very best original film materials for mastering onto video, and digital transfers, for use on both tape and disc, became the norm for the first time in 1991.

Three all-time classics we feared might never find their way to home theaters—*Fantasia*, *The Last Picture Show* and *Children of Paradise*—benefited substantially from these trends in their first-ever video releases. They earned ViVA Gold! awards not only for their time-honored content, but for meticulous and imaginative presentations on video. These titles set the tone for the year, but there were many others to get excited about. What follows is the best of the best: the 1992 ViVA Gold! and ViVA awards for video software, presented in alphabetical order.

1991 ViVA Gold! Winners—Videocassettes

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS (PUBLIC MEDIA)

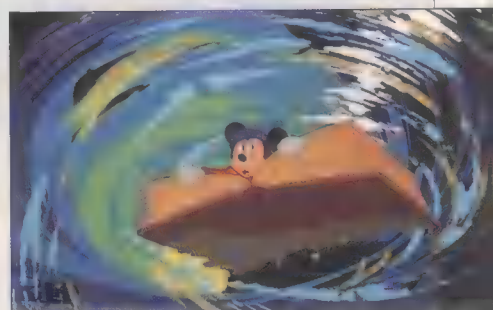
Ex-Monty Python member Michael Palin and a film crew of five follow the

path of Jules Verne's fictional Phileas Fogg in this BBC documentary, using only surface transportation in an extreme case of life imitating art. Will our travel guide make it home in the allotted time despite such modern inconveniences as a less-than-placid Persian Gulf? Palin creates the first true-to-life travel video, complete with unexpected delays and stomach disorders. Even so, he keeps the nearly six-hour program light, entertaining and insightful.



CHILDREN OF PARADISE (HOME VISION CINEMA)

The most beloved film in the history of French cinema was newly translated and subtitled for this long-awaited video release. But *Children of Paradise* (1945) is far from the high-brow fare most viewers associate with Europe—its romance and epic grandeur rival that of *Gone With the Wind*, the film with which it is most often compared. And don't miss Criterion's laserdisc edition, which features a lengthy interview with 85-year-old director Marcel Carne, presented in both French and English.



FANTASIA (WALT DISNEY)

It was Christmas in November for animation fans of all ages when Disney's finest work finally became available on cassette. Had the company rushed this one out with little attention to quality, it would still have reigned as the video event of the year. But Disney restored its 51-year-old treasure frame by beautiful frame. Discounted to well below \$20 in most cities, *Fantasia* now truly belongs to the public that once scorned it. Before it's pulled from release—supposedly forever—*Fantasia* will likely sell more than 10 million copies in America alone. If only Walt had lived to see it.

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (ORION)

Taut and seamless with nary a single wasted moment, *The Silence of the Lambs* is entertainment so well-made it almost inadvertently enters the realm of art. The single greatest act of director Jonathan Demme's career was casting Anthony Hopkins as the brilliant and deranged Hannibal Lecter—his spell-binding performance makes that forthcoming Oscar seem downright anticlimactic. We would have preferred ■



mildly letterboxed edition—there is some annoying artificial panning here—but first-time viewers will be far too riveted to notice.

TO SLEEP WITH ANGER (SVS)

Generations and cultures clash in this unclassifiable gem from director Charles Burnett. Star and co-producer Danny Glover was singularly devoted to this project, one of very few recent films to depict an honest-to-goodness black middle-class family without even a hint of urban terror. But the film's humor and poignancy transcend all racial and class boundaries, and Glover responds with the performance of his career. Home video was made for movies like this—it should gradually find the audience it deserves, if only through word-of-mouth at local mom-and-pop rental stores.

1991 ViVA Gold! Winners—Laserdiscs

APOCALYPSE NOW (WIDESCREEN EDITION— PARAMOUNT/PIONEER)

The most misunderstood movie of the past 20 years has been completely revitalized by this stunning new laserdisc. Without *Apocalypse Now*, there would be no *Platoon*, no *Full Metal Jacket*—every Vietnam film of the '80s owes a huge debt to director Francis Ford Coppola's



gut-wrenching vision of the war. The widescreen disc's audio tracks—but not those of the new pan-and-scan edition—were remixed by the film's Oscar-winning sound man, Walter Murch, and encoded in Dolby Surround using THX equipment. The sound is breathtaking—everyone with a disc player and surround system simply must have this disc.

THE BAND WAGON (CAV EDITION—MGM/UA)

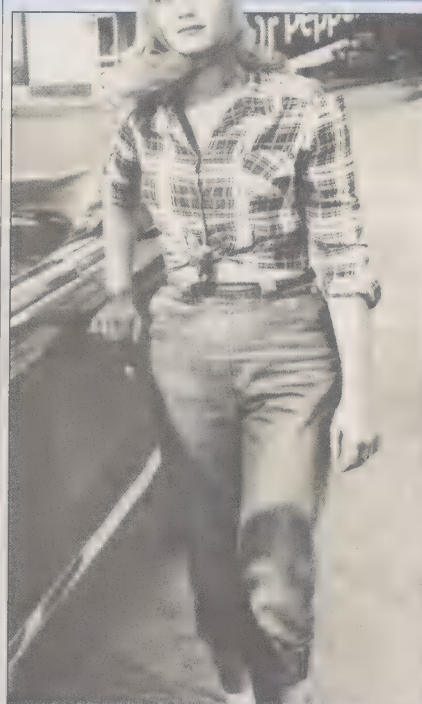
The gorgeous Technicolor restoration of the ultimate “backstage” musical displays a number of great talents—director Vincente Minnelli, songwriters Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz, screenwriters Betty Comden and Adolph



Green, and hoofers Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse—as they've seldom been seen since the genre's heyday. Witty and inspired, *The Band Wagon* gave Fred Astaire his most endearing role: a washed-up film actor ripe for a comeback on the Broadway stage. This five-sided CAV set includes a deleted musical number, Cyd Charisse's “Two-Faced Woman,” plus the original trailer and 68 chapter stops for the unbelievable price of \$39.98.

THE DREAM IS ALIVE (LUMIVISION)

The giant-screen IMAX film format has thrilled museum-goers for many years, and the first video translation of its rich and finely detailed picture provides similar excitement at home. Shot largely by astronauts while aboard the space shuttle, *The Dream Is Alive* presents one awe-inspiring image of our planet after another. Because some scenes are virtually free of unwanted picture artifacts—a rarity indeed—and because we simply never get tired of it, this has become one of our standard test discs for evaluating monitors and disc players. We can offer no higher recommendation than this.



THE LAST PICTURE SHOW (VOYAGER/CRITERION)

We've been waiting for this 1971 movie to find its way to home video since the first Betamax VCR was introduced, but we could scarcely have predicted what the Voyager Company would do with it once the perennial copyright problems were cleared up. Director Peter Bogdanovich added seven crucial and previously unseen minutes for this edition, resulting in an even better film than his original masterpiece. The deluxe Criterion treatment—including analog-channel commentary and multimedia supplement—has seldom been used to better effect. Most important, this beautiful black-and-white portrait of a dying Texas town still contains the best ensemble acting we've ever seen.

THE WAR OF THE ROSES (FOXVIDEO/ IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT)

Every major film director we interviewed in 1991 expressed deep appreciation for the laserdisc format, but *The War of the Roses* director Danny DeVito took matters into his own hands with his Special Collector's Edition boxed set. DeVito assembled this extraordinary package himself, complete with a 15-minute collage of unused footage, his own hilarious analog-track commentary, a newly shot intro for the supplemental section and more. But the best testament to the power of this disc-only project is the movie itself, which seems far better here than it did in its original theatrical run.



1991 ViVA Winners— Videocassettes

BLACK RAIN (FOX LORBER)

Not to be confused with the Ridley Scott/Michael Douglas movie of the same name, Shohei Imamura's *Black Rain* is a terrifying fictional look at the



aftermath of Hiroshima. The untold story here is the lingering social stigma for those who may or may not develop radiation sickness years after the blast. Beautifully photographed and haunting beyond all expectation, *Black Rain* is food for thought as we slide into a new round of WWII anniversaries.

CINEMA PARADISO (HBO)

This heartfelt valentine to the power of the movies is quite likely the most charming feature released on video this year. Warm, funny and unabashedly nostalgic, the 1989 Oscar-winner for Best Foreign-Language Film probably reached more people than any Italian movie since Fellini's *Amarcord*, another vivid tale of small-town life. Even so, *Cinema Paradiso* remained inaccessible to many before it was finally released on home video.

LONESOME DOVE (CABIN FEVER)

Based on a novel by Larry McMurtry (author of *The Last Picture Show*), this network miniseries captures the grand spirit of the classic western while somehow retaining a personal tone. Robert Duvall, Tommy Lee Jones and Anjelica Huston stand out among the all-star cast, sinking their teeth into juicy roles. Don't let its reputation as a tear-jerker scare you away—*Lonesome Dove* is blockbuster filmmaking and first-rate entertainment.



THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE (BUENA VISTA)

Kids love Jay Ward's raucous cartoon series, but spouses and other full-grown types are the ones to keep an eye on when nearing the R&B display at your local video store: In their first week of release, the series' six initial volumes took up no less than six spots on the top-10 video sales chart. *Rocky & Bullwinkle*'s sly humor didn't hurt sales to adults, but neither did each volume's remarkable \$12.99 list price.

GOODFELLAS (WARNER)

This incredibly fast-paced and funny look at American Mafia culture shows director Martin Scorsese at the absolute



peak of his craft. The camera work, the use of popular songs and the editing (by Scorsese's longtime collaborator Thelma Schoonmaker) are all above reproach. And the mind-boggling three-minute Steadicam shot through the inner reaches of the Copacabana is alone worth the price of a rental.

1991 ViVA Winners— Laserdiscs

GOLDFINGER (VOYAGER/CRITERION)

The best of all James Bond films richly deserves the respect suggested by its admission to "The Criterion Collection,"

laserdisc's pantheon of all-time greats. And the Voyager Company should be commended for not being afraid to give so-called "entertainment" films like this one its seal of approval. Movies are made to be enjoyed, and *Goldfinger* delivers like few films we've seen.

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS (FOXVIDEO/IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT)

Those wondrous suburban pastels survive intact on the beautifully produced laserdisc edition of Tim Burton's most appealing film to date. With their atten-



tion to set design and detailed surround tracks, all Burton's movies (*Batman*, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, et al.) work well on laser, but *Edward Scissorhands* has a warm, soulful quality that raises it above the competition.

JACQUELINE DU PRE AND THE ELGAR CELLO CONCERTO (TELDEC/ELEKTRA INTERNATIONAL CLASSICS)

One of the greatest musicians who ever lived lost her musical voice to multiple sclerosis before she reached 30, but not before director Christopher Nupen captured her brilliance in this wonderful film. Side one documents her life, her work and her special relationship to the great Elgar Cello Concerto, while side two presents her complete performance of this moving piece. Even those who prefer Madonna to Mozart will find much to love on this landmark disc.

THE GODFATHER COLLECTOR'S EDITION (PARAMOUNT/PIONEER)

Coppola's brilliant *Godfather* trilogy needs no introduction here, but this remarkable compilation of all three films and a fascinating documentary called

continued on page 103

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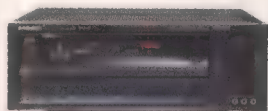
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BY FRANK BEACHAM

A TALE OF TWO FORMATS

S-VHS and Hi8 are straddling the line between consumers and professionals.

SPECIALTY

Sony's Hi8 EVO-9650 VCR is designed specifically for use in computer animation. When driven by a device such as the Video Toaster, the \$6,000 unit records individual frames of an animation as they are rendered every few seconds. The result is smooth animation.

A television station, KTTC-TV in Minnesota, shoots all its news segments on S-VHS tape. A reporter with no previous camcorder experience shoots a prime-time PBS documentary, *Hello Moscow*, on Hi8. A cable TV company, TCI Cable in Buffalo, rolls in local spots from automated S-VHS playback decks. The Museum of Television and Radio, the world's leading archive of broadcast programs, manages its collection on computer-controlled Hi8 decks.

S-VHS and Hi8, introduced several years ago as high-end versions of the original consumer formats, have come a long way. And continue to evolve, but not entirely in ways that were expected. Today, both formats have established themselves not only with videophiles, but with professionals as well, a development that's had notable effects on the continuing progress of these two technologies.

- It's widened the gray area between the consumer and professional sides of the video market, giving legitimacy and diversity to "prosumer" components.
- It's led to a burst of innovation in pro-oriented S-VHS and Hi8 components, a remarkable flip-flopping of the way technology usually works.
- And it's set the stage for some of the advanced features developed for pro machines to find their way into models aimed largely at consumers.

The appeal of S-VHS and Hi8 among professional and semipro videographers has helped to offset the reluctance of large numbers of consumers to invest in the formats. Users of high-end gear make up only a small fraction of America's video customers. For example, S-VHS accounts for only 2 percent of all VHS sales, while Hi8 accounts for from 10 to 20 percent of 8mm camcorder sales. While



PRO

JVC's top-of-the-line BR-S822U professional S-VHS VCR includes advanced features such as a digital Y/C separator, playback and recording on S-VHS-C and VHS-C cassettes without an adapter, and optional plug-in cards for timebase correction and time code.



S-VHS and Hi8 were designed, in part, to increase the popular appetite for sophisticated equipment, their success in the pro market is somewhat ironic.

By shifting the luminance signal to a higher frequency range than that of VHS and 8mm, both upgrades succeeded in boosting horizontal resolution from about 250 lines for the standard versions to 400 or more lines. The signal-to-noise ratios for both formats were also improved. Consumers reacted cautiously, not always convinced the extra resolution justified the higher prices. Professionals saw the extra quality as a bargain compared to the usual prices of pro gear.

"There is unquestionably ■ blurring in the marketplace," says Sony spokesman Alec Shapiro. Indeed, as a reaction to the confusing crossover of consumer and professional products, Sony reorganized its professional sales force in 1991. "We have corporate users who want D-2, while television stations are going the other way and saying they want some Hi8 units. The old divisions don't make sense anymore." Now the company's sales force for professional products can sell any device in the Sony line, from the most expensive broadcast TV camera to the lowliest 8mm camcorder. The old pro-versus-consumer sales divisions are gone.



TRICKLE-UP THEORY

More significantly, the crossover has also helped to shift research on the formats in pro-oriented directions. Call it the Trickle-Up Theory: S-VHS and Hi8 technology developed for use in the home is being adopted by and improved for professionals. What makes this remarkable is that it reverses the normal trickle-down course of technological evolution. Sophisticated products are typically developed for professionals, then gradually shrunk, streamlined, simplified, altered, packaged and priced in ways suitable for consumers.

S-VHS and Hi8 are turning the process on its head, even to the point of challenging the granddaddy of all pro cassette formats, 3/4-inch U-Matic. But while consumers tend to think the formats signify fixed levels of performance, manufacturers warn users not to confuse the performance standards of their S-VHS and Hi8 consumer products with those of professional versions.

"There is a fairly substantial difference in image quality between professional and consumer decks," says David Walton, JVC's marketing manager for professional products. "The S-VHS format defines a minimum level of performance machines have to achieve to carry that logo. The term S-VHS, implying only one level of picture quality, is really not true."

Top-rated professional S-VHS VCRs, which are priced from \$6,000 to \$8,000, include recent advances not found at the consumer level. For example, multigeneration capability has been improved by including comb filter decoders in the Y/C separation circuitry and by improving crosstalk cancellation, chroma enhancement and



CONSUMER

Although Canon's Hi8 UCS1 fits in a coat pocket, it shoots high-resolution pictures, and offers a variety of automatic exposure modes.

PROSUMER

Perhaps the first prosumer camcorder, Sony's Betacam-styled Hi8 CCD-V5000 includes a timebase corrector, stereo PCM audio and several digital video effects.

continued on page 103

BY LANCELOT BRAITHWAITE



TOKYO TIME WARP

Two shows deliver a fast-forward preview of video's future.

In Japan, where following new developments in video is somewhat more of a spectator sport than here, the two premier showcases for products and technology are both open to the public for at least part of their runs. And the crowds rarely disappoint. They jam the aisles of the annual Audio Fair and the Japan Electronics Show, both held within a week of each other, and wait in long lines for demonstrations of new audio and video equipment with the enthusiasm of American football fans lining up for playoff tickets.

This year's shows in Tokyo were no exception. There was a lot of fascinating new video technology to see, some of it coming soon to the U.S. and some reserved for Japan's legions of videophiles. The forthcoming audio formats of DCC and MiniDisc generated the greatest interest, but VCRs, video projectors, TV screens, satellite receivers, camcorders and CD-Interactive players all offered surprises.



Digital Dimension: JVC's HR-Z1 S-VHS VCR with digital sound, for about \$2,700, also includes a MUSE decoder for satellite broadcasts.

The high-end VCRs were particularly notable — especially new S-VHS models with digital PCM audio by JVC, Mitsubishi and Panasonic. The audio is recorded deep in the tape, like hi-fi audio, but at a higher carrier frequency. Two 16-bit channels are available with a sampling frequency of 48 kilohertz. Mitsubishi's entry is actually a two-piece system consisting of a VCR augmented by a digital adapter.

The other S-VHS VCRs with PCM sound were all one-piece models. JVC's HR-Z1, costing about \$2,700, also in-

cludes a MUSE/NTSC decoder and a broadcast satellite tuner. Panasonic's model, a prototype, featured pro-quality amorphous recording heads. The high-end S-VHS decks make more sense in the context of the Japanese video culture, where S-VHS has succeeded as a programming format. A visit to any good video store reveals a wide variety of releases for sale and rental in S-VHS (as well as in 8mm and laserdisc).

More surprising was a fourth VCR with PCM sound — a Hi8 deck by Toshiba, representing the company's first consumer foray into this format. The E-800BS boasts zirconium video heads to reduce noise, a 3-D digital video noise suppression filter, center loading and the ability to record 24 hours of music on a single cassette.

The BS in the model number stands for a built-in broadcast satellite receiver, a common feature (with an unfortunate abbreviation) included in components for the Japanese domestic market. Almost all VCR brands in Japan include a satellite



2 Ways to Watch: Wide Vision TV set by JVC displays pictures in 16:9 or 4:3 aspect ratios, with the help of motorized side panels (above).



tuner to take advantage of the country's current boom in satellite broadcasting.

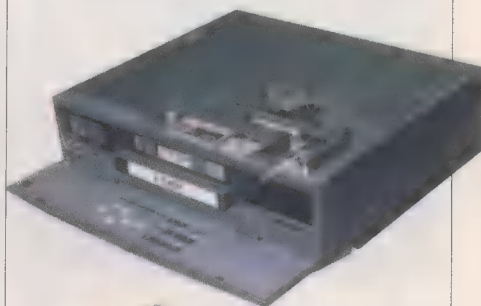
Hitachi and Toshiba also showed so-called dual-cassette VCRs. The decks accommodate two cassettes, but since they only have one tape transport, neither cassette can be used to dub from the other. However, Panasonic displayed a dual-well VCR with one transport mechanism for a standard VHS tape and a second one for a VHS-C cassette, eliminating the need for an adapter and making it easier to transfer material from compact to full-size cassettes. Each transport has separate controls.

The interest in home theater products was especially intense among Japanese visitors to the shows. Although the Japanese tend to live in smaller dwellings than American citizens, this doesn't dampen their appetite for large TV screens. Front- and rear-projection sets, as well as large tube TV sets, drew enthusiastic crowds. The interest was spurred in part by the recent expansion in MUSE broadcasting, from one to eight hours a day. MUSE is Japan's high-definition satellite, which transmits Japan's Hi-Vision HDTV system. Indeed, Japanese viewers can watch programs broadcast in Hi-Vision, EDTV, and, of course, NTSC, either over the air or via satellite.

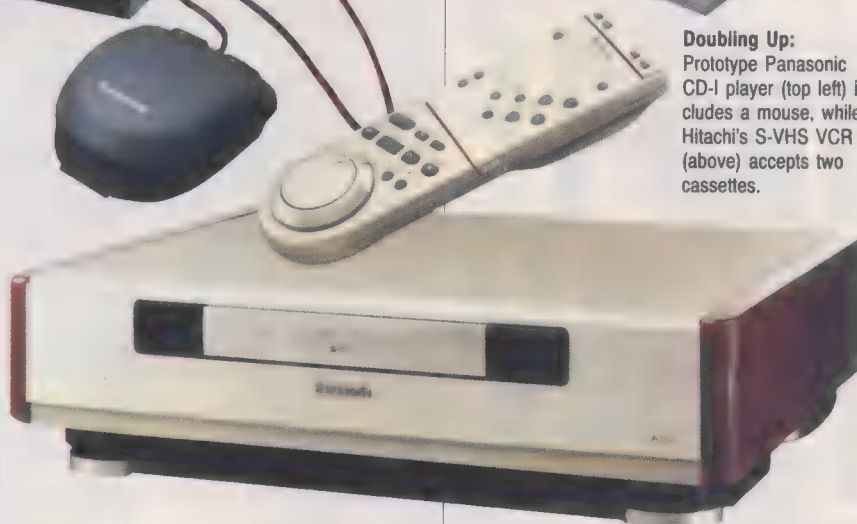
However, the smaller apartments certainly increase the potential market for LCD projectors, like those shown by Sharp, JVC, Mitsubishi and Citizen. The images they throw continue to get brighter and more detailed. The projectors require little space and Japanese projection screens are sometimes built into pieces of furniture so they automatically roll down and disappear from sight.

Several manufacturers also showed widescreen TV sets using the new 16:9 aspect ratio, most with tuners for standard broadcasts and Hi-Vision satellite broadcasts. The sets showed varying schemes for displaying 4:3 pictures on the wider screens, including running smaller pictures along one side of the primary image (known as POP, for picture on picture).

continued on page 98



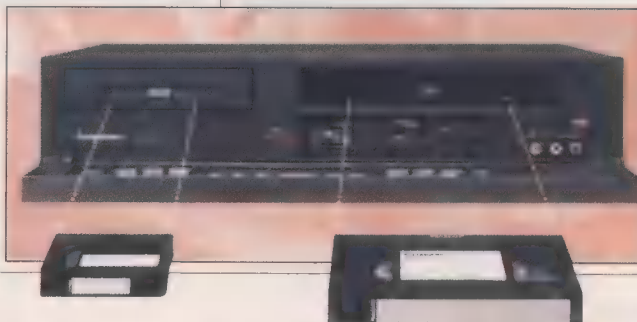
Doubling Up: Prototype Panasonic CD-I player (top left) includes a mouse, while Hitachi's S-VHS VCR (above) accepts two cassettes.



Home Theatrics: Panasonic's S-VHS VCR features digital audio and pro-style amorphous recording heads, while a model room at the Audio Fair shows a large, wide projection screen in a residential setting.

Video Twofer:

Panasonic VCR has separate tape wells for VHS and VHS-C cassettes to simplify transfers from compact to standard-size tapes.



BY STAN PINKWAS

C·U·S·T·O·M INSTALLATION OF THE MONTH

TRIPLE PLAY

*Sports come alive
in a 3-screen room*

What happens when three great sports events compete for TV watchers on the same afternoon? Most sports fans choose one, then flip the channels to track the other two. But one home owner in Indi-



Play Ball: Three TVs, set up for multichannel sports viewing, all use the room's surround-sound system.

anapolis, Indiana, found a more personal solution. He commissioned a home theater with three full-size TV sets, side by side, to satisfy his passion for watching several channels at once.

When sports aren't available to fill all the screens, the owner likes to run all-news or weather channels on the side sets. The unusual arrangement also serves as the control center for a multi-room audio system, which operates independently of the video system from remote keypads in several of the rooms.

The key to the installation was keeping operation of the sets simple, yet flexible, while taking full advantage of the system's surround-sound capabilities. Installer Jim Swearingen accepted the challenge. Swearingen is a member of the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association (see box) and a designer with Tom Doherty's Architectural Audio & Video in Carmel, Indiana.

For the room's centerpiece, Swearingen picked a 45-inch Mitsubishi rear-projection set, flanked by a pair of 20-inch Sonys. With the help of Cool Electronic Stuff, a Florida-based electronics manufacturer, Swearingen designed a special relay that lets his client operate all three TV sets from a single remote control.

A single button on the remote, a Yamaha MRX-100, toggles between the sets, each of which is fitted with a small green LED designed to indicate which

set is under the remote's control at any given moment. Meanwhile, the relay package channels the audio from the selected TV set through the room's surround-sound system. This gives the viewer full control of the pictures and the audio, plus surround sound from all the TV sets.

When not switched to ball games, the sets accept video signals from an MDP-333 laserdisc player and a SLV-575 VHS VCR, both by Sony, *continued on page 122*



Peripheral Vision: Installer Jim Swearingen rigged the TVs for easy channel hopping with one remote.

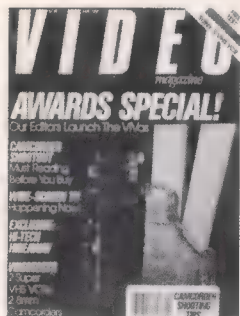


The Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association is a nationwide non-profit trade organization made up of companies that specialize in installing electronic entertainment, automation, security and communication systems in the home. CEDIA may be contacted by telephoning 1-800-CEDIA30 or by writing: CEDIA, 10400 Roberts Road, Palos Hills, IL 60465.

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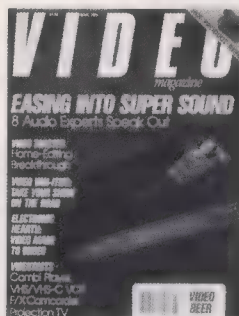


JANUARY 1991

The Year's Best Gear, Tapes, Discs
Mini-Camcorder Shootout

Videotests:

RCA Pro 859 Camcorder
Sony SLV-R5 S-VHS VCR
Canon A1 Hi8 Camcorder
Toshiba SV-771 S-VHS VCR

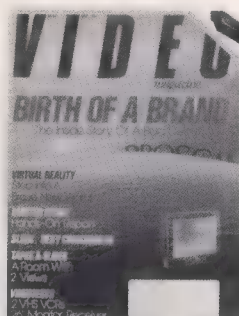


MARCH 1991

Design Your Own Home Theater
Video Toaster: Home Edit Breakthrough

Videotests:

Panasonic PV-7000 VHS/VHS-C VCR
Canon H-850 Hi8 Camcorder
Hitachi CU-4601B Projection TV
Radio Shack MD-1000 CD/LV Player

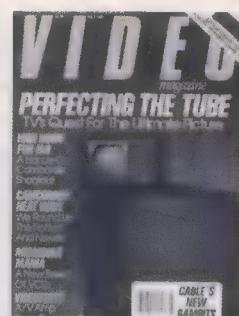


MAY 1991

6 Sleek New Camcorders
Hands-On Test: Panasonic WJ-AVE5
Video Mixer

Videotests:

B & O MX-5500 TV
Hitachi VT-F441A VHS VCR
Goldstar GVH-9000M VHS VCR
Sansui RZ-9500AV A/V Receiver

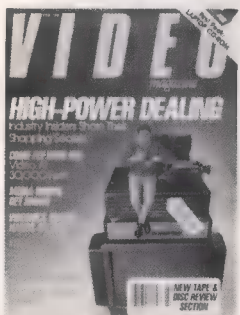


JULY 1991

Pursuing the Ultimate TV Picture
Six Hi8 Camcorders Compared
Hands-On Test: Sima ED/IT3

Videotests:

Pioneer CLD-M90 CD/LV Player
GE CG-805 8mm Camcorder
Sony SLV-686HF VHS VCR
Onkyo A-SV810 A/V Amplifier

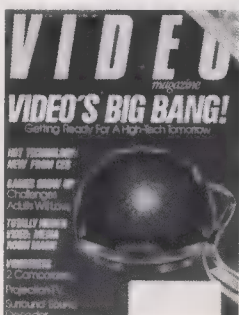


FEBRUARY 1991

Secrets of Buying High-End Gear
Hands-On Test: Videonics Editor

Videotests:

Sony EV-S550 8mm VCR
Sharp VL-L510U VHS Camcorder
Pioneer SD-P4543 Projection TV
Atlantic Technology Surround
Sound System

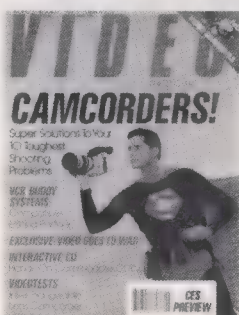


APRIL 1991

Preview Video's High-Tech Tomorrow
The Latest Video Games

Videotests:

Vidikron TGS-200 Projection TV
Realistic 152 8mm Camcorder
Fosgate-Audionics DSL-Two
Surround Sound Processor
Panasonic PV-40 VHS-C Camcorder

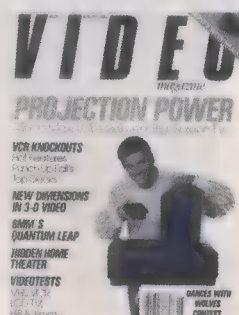


JUNE 1991

Special: Camcorder Section
VCR/Camcorder Combos: Easier Edits
CDs Go Interactive

Videotests:

Canon L1 Hi8 Camcorder
Sony CCD-V801 Hi8 Camcorder
Hitachi VIP-RX6EX CD/LV Player
Sharp XV-120ZU LCD Projection TV

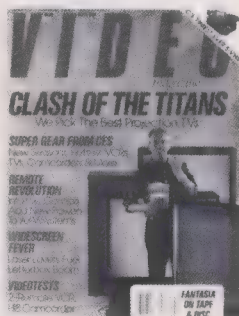


AUGUST 1991

VCR Update: The Latest Technology
Projection TVs New Direction
Spotlight on 3D TV

Videotests:

Magnavox LCD Projection TV
RCA Pro 880 Hi8 Camcorder
Ricoh R-105 8mm Camcorder
Zenith VRJ-210 VHS VCR



SEPTEMBER 1991

The Season's Hottest Gear
Eyes-On Test: Seven Projection TVs
New Wave Remotes

Videotests:

Panasonic PV-S4167 S-VHS VCR
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BY STEVE DITLEA



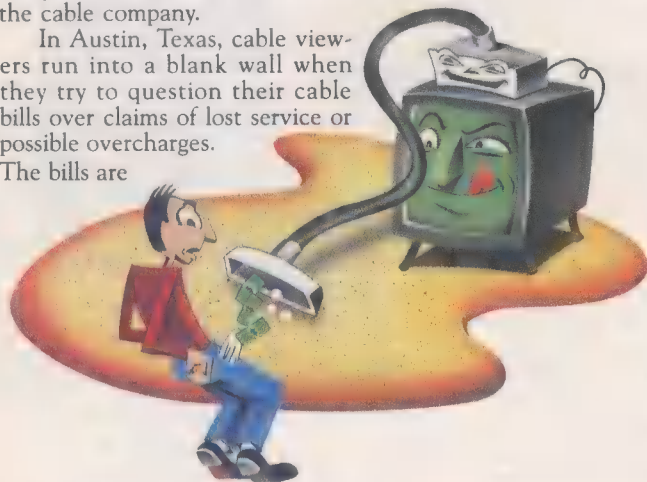
THE TROUBLE WITH CABLE

A flood of complaints may bring sweeping changes to cable.

One day in Hoboken, New Jersey, cable viewers discovered they were about to lose some of the best features, like picture-in-picture, of their costly TV sets. The local cable company was planning to scramble all its signals, forcing subscribers to use its descrambler box, which only permitted one channel at a time into home systems. TV watchers bombarded the Hoboken city council with complaints, demanding something be done. Immediately, the council promised to prevent this change in service—only to back down when it discovered itself powerless under the terms of its franchise contract with the cable company.

In Austin, Texas, cable viewers run into a blank wall when they try to question their cable bills over claims of lost service or possible overcharges.

The bills are



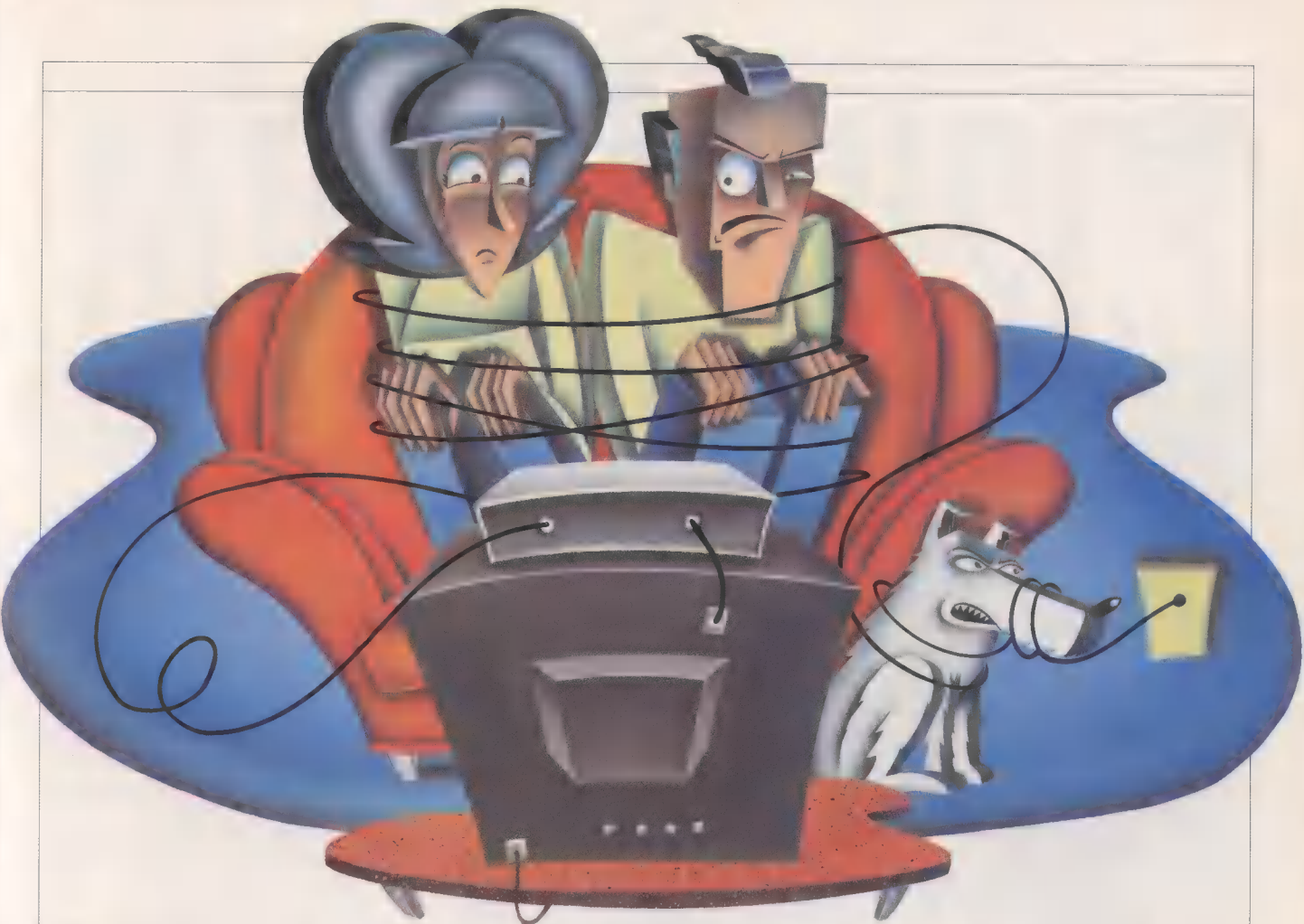
so confusing that subscribers are unable to substantiate any problems they've experienced for purposes of a refund. The cable company says it can't be expected to precisely track each and every subscriber's actual cable use.

This is the winter of our cable discontent. Soaring fees, poor service, unreliable signal quality and snooze-inducing programs are just a few of the complaints driving cable subscribers to distraction. And since more than 60 percent of U.S. homes have cable TV, that adds up to a lot of viewers. Like many of today's inadequately maintained cable systems, my own local 41-channel system suffers from poor picture quality and frequent outages. And even though the local cable franchise in this picturesque hamlet just north of New York City was recently up for renewal, competing bids to improve the system were effectively eliminated by federal deregulation of the cable television industry.

What's a TV viewer to do? Re-regulation is in the air, but no one can be sure that the legislation now pending can straighten out all the trouble, even if the legislation passes. Recent moves by the Federal Communications Commission hold out the hope that local telephone companies may be allowed to compete with cable systems, but it will be years before this or any other alternative to cable is available to most Americans. In the meantime, it's still possible to "just say no" as I did—kicking the wired habit cold turkey—but I'm getting ahead of myself.

From living rooms to Capitol Hill, everyone seems to be complaining about cable TV these days. Early last year, when *Video Magazine* polled its readers about their video discon-

NED SHAW



tents, the top complaints included the cost of cable and poor cable service. More recently, *Consumer Reports*, in a survey of 200,000 readers, "turned up ■ new low in customer satisfaction" with cable. One in four readers said they were dissatisfied due to rate increases, service outages, poor picture quality, billing problems, botched installation or repair, and difficulty in getting through to the cable company by telephone to register complaints.

Despite the torrent of dissatisfaction, representatives of the cable industry insist little needs to be remedied. Most of cable's problems can be blamed on its growing pains during the tremendous expansion in the 1980s, according to Stephen Effros, president of the Community Antenna Television Association, a cable trade group based in Fairfax, Virginia. "We went into 40 million new homes in the last 10 years. No one has ever done that before," he noted.

In fact, both cable's immense success and its attendant problems can be attributed to federal deregulation after the 1984 Cable Communications Policy Act removed local control over rates and service standards. James Mooney, president of the National Cable Television Association (NCTA), the major cable trade group, credits the act with unleashing the cable industry and dramatically increasing program choices. "Deregulation has fostered the creation of 22 new programming services, with another 30 in development," says Mooney.

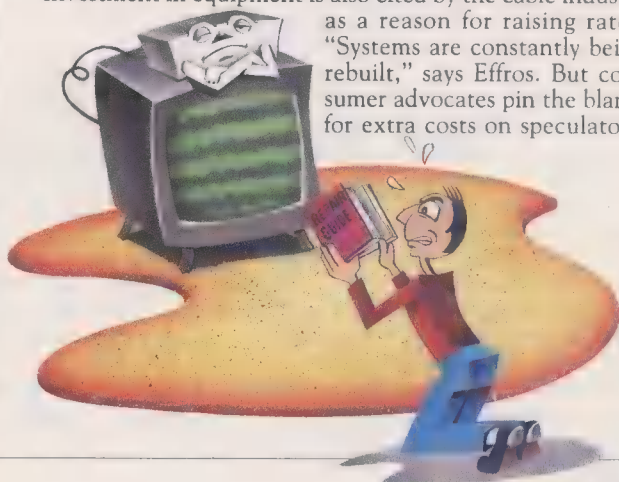
Nonetheless, the results of deregulation have been felt most strongly in one other area: subscribers' pockets. According to a survey by the General Accounting Office, Congress' financial watchdog, cable rates for the most popular level of programming increased by 61 percent since deregulation, far outpacing inflation since the index of consumer goods rose less than 18 percent during the same period. The report also found that from December 1989 to March 1991 the average monthly

price for basic cable rose 9 percent (nearly twice the inflation rate) to \$17.34, with an accompanying average decrease of one channel. The fact remains that since there is usually only one cable TV system in any community, these local monopolies can charge as much as they think the market will bear.

The cable industry says it has to raise rates to pay for new programming. But Jeff Chester, director of the Teledemocracy Project, a consumer group sponsored by Ralph Nader, notes that Time Warner, the second largest cable company in America, "revealed that programming expenditures by the cable industry between 1984 and 1990 went up by 15.2 percent, while during the same period, cable subscriber rates escalated by 52.5 percent." Chester contends that with programming costs ranging from \$1 to \$3 per subscriber, the rate for basic cable should be no more than \$5 per month.

Investment in equipment is also cited by the cable industry as a reason for raising rates.

"Systems are constantly being rebuilt," says Effros. But consumer advocates pin the blame for extra costs on speculators.



CABLE



How To Track Cable Costs



Cable Watch

How many times have you set your VCR to record a program while you're away—only to find nothing but black-and-white confetti on the tape when you replay it, the result of a cable signal outage? One way to keep cable systems on their toes is by reporting outages whenever they occur. Although there is no uniform policy on signal failure, most systems provide some kind of refund or credit proportional to the time the cable signal is out. The problem is keeping track of outages, even when you're not watching television.

Now two Los Angeles-area inventors, Jim Quesnell and Ken Lefner, have come up with a device the size of a remote control that attaches to the main cable to your house and totes up the amount of time the cable signal is on the fritz. Cable Watch, as the \$29.95 device is called, includes an electronic circuit that detects the carrier signal sent with every program over the cabler. When the signal is absent, Cable Watch starts counting and displays the total downtime on a digital display. It also provides a readout of the percentage of time the cable is actually operating. Manufactured by New Era Technology, Cable Watch can be ordered by calling 818-710-7063.

Since deregulation, nearly half the country's 9,500 cable systems have changed owners, driving the cost of some cable systems up to \$3,000 per subscriber and amassing huge debts for which consumers must foot the bill. Capitol Hill has become the focus of efforts to rein in cable through bills to re-regulate the industry. Senate bill S.12 and House bill H.R. 1303 are similar to measures introduced in the previous Congress, where the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act was unanimously approved by the House, but never came to a vote in the Senate. This year, hearings before subcommittees headed by Sen. Daniel Inouye and Rep. Edward Markey aired the trouble with cable as consumer advocates and broadcasters countered lobbying by cable systems and trade groups.

The more stringent bill, S.12, includes provisions to re-regulate basic rates, establish adequate customer service and minimum technical standards, limit the number of subscribers any one cable operator can reach nationwide (two operators, TCI Inc. and Time Warner, now service more than 40 percent of all cable subscribers) and limit the number of channels any one cable programmer (like Ted Turner) can occupy on a system. One of the bill's spon-

sors, Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee, states that fostering competition "could reduce cable television rates by half."

However, the chances for re-regulation in Congress now seem uncertain. With the bill introduced early in the session, hopes had been running high. Andy Schwartzmann, executive director of the Washington-based Media Access Project, a public-interest law firm, had predicted the Senate would pass a bill and the House would shortly follow. But just as we went to press, the Senate version of the bill failed to come up for a vote, ending any chance of passage in the current session. President Bush has said he will veto any attempt at re-regulation.

Even if cable re-regulation is enacted, it won't be a cure-all for viewer discontent. According to Schwartzmann, "the legislation will provide only a small amount of relief against price gouging, and marginal relief of service problems."

The legislation has weaknesses, not the least of which is that its rate provisions only apply to basic cable, an increasingly narrow service since most cable systems practice "re-tiering," taking popular services like CNN, MTV and the Discovery Channel out of the lowest-priced program package, and lim-

iting basic cable to over-the-air broadcast stations. In addition, notes Chester, the bills "don't directly return control over rates and services to local authorities." Instead, they give the FCC responsibility for rate regulation guidelines as well as for setting norms for service and technical standards. Local authorities would have to apply to the FCC for jurisdiction after accepting the guidelines.

However, the FCC recently undermined consumer interests when it offered to redefine the threshold below which local authorities can regulate basic cable service rates. The commissioners proposed that "effective competition" exists and rates *cannot* be regulated when six unduplicated over-the-air TV signals are available in the community served by a cable system (instead of the previous three-signal rule) or when an independently owned, competing multichannel delivery system is subscribed to by 10 percent of the cable system's potential customers.

Re-regulation legislation would also not protect the program diversity that was once the great promise of cable TV. With as many as 120 channels to browse among, viewers still find themselves clicking through endless reruns, World War II documentaries, Z-grade movies, trash sports and "infomercials." Ever wonder why there are several shopping networks, but no 24-hour news outlets other than Ted Turner's? Or why your cable system doesn't offer some of the

continued on page 118

CABLE SOUND-OFF

Are you a silently suffering cable consumer? Are you plagued by rising rates, costlier program packages, poor signals, frequent outages, mishandled repairs, unresponsive front offices? All of the above? If you have a story we'd like to hear it.

Even better, we'll pass it on to the people who should hear it—the congressional committees considering the re-regulation of cable. This is your chance to sound off and have your voice heard. Address letters to Cable, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

TAPES & DISCS

N E W R E L E A S E S

FEATURE FILMS

Thelma & Louise

1991. Susan Sarandon, Geena Davis; dir. Ridley Scott. Hi-fi surround, letterboxed or pan-and-scan. (R) 127 min. \$94.99. LD \$24.98. MGM/UA.

A big-screen sensation, *Thelma & Louise* arrives on home video with its timeliness intact, thanks to the nasty spectacle of the Clarence Thomas hearings. No doubt the prospect of angry women with guns upsets defensive men, besides delighting their female counterparts. Still, that this well-crafted action film can galvanize an audience says more about the weak competition than the power of this particular movie.

T&L plays like a standard road saga, only for women. Waitress Louise (Susan Sarandon) and her housewife friend Thelma (Geena Davis) aren't looking for trouble when they begin a weekend fishing trip—they just want a break from their unsatisfying lives. All hell breaks loose, though, when Louise kills Thelma's would-be rapist outside an Arkansas honky-tonk. Transformed into America's most wanted, they embark on a breakneck voyage of self-discovery, highlighted by armed robbery, before going out in a blaze of glory.

Downplaying logic in favor of an exciting story, director Ridley Scott (*Alien*, *Black Rain*) and crew make two hours zip by like a quarter-mile drag race. The plot offers fresh twists, although it's easy to spot the "shocking" ending a mile away. Sarandon truly gets better with age; alternating determined calm and raw fury, she suggests the accumulated pain of a lifetime of small defeats. While Davis sometimes strains for effect, her charm never degenerates into the cuteness of *The Accidental Tourist*. Michael Madsen makes a sad, striking presence as the boyfriend who can't change



Two for the Road: Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis learn to point and shoot in *Thelma & Louise*.

Louise's fate. Playing a cop with his usual gritty flair, Harvey Keitel tries valiantly to transcend a poorly defined role.

Scott tells a bracing tale, but is it a feminist statement? Hardly. More an exploitation flick than a serious treatise à la Spike Lee, its evocation of real-life ills does lend even the most exaggerated characters, like Thelma's patronizing husband (Christopher McDonald), an aura of authenticity. As superior escapism, *Thelma & Louise* might spark discussions of sexual politics in other films. However, given Hollywood's track record, don't hold your breath.

—Jon Young

City Slickers

1991. Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern, Jack Palance; dir. Ron Underwood. Hi-fi surround. (PG-13) 114 min. \$99.95. LD \$34.98. New Line.

Billy Crystal is that rare comic who can play both schlemiel and romantic leading man, a delicate balance that

makes for classic humor in a field littered with high-concept jokefests. *City Slickers* became last summer's comedy smash because, for the most part, its scriptwriters and director followed suit, aiming for funny bone and heartstrings.

The first two-thirds of this film play like a master's thesis in professional comedy. Radio ad salesman Mitch Robbins (Crystal) and two pals (Daniel Stern, Bruno Kirby) embark on yet another buddy bonding ritual to keep midlife crisis at bay, a two-week cattle drive through the Southwest. The plot unfolds predictably—a token woman joins the cowboy wanna-bes, Mitch's smart sensitivity ticks off the ranch hands, his buddies reveal personal foibles—but brilliant one-liners and precisely drawn characterizations replace the stale smell of formula with the bracing sting of wit.

Alas, after losing their leathery trail boss (a delightfully self-mocking Jack Palance), the trio are forced to fend for



Cattle Call: Stern, Crystal and Kirby trade swivel chairs for saddle sores in *City Slickers*.

themselves. Formula triumphs, albeit with hysterical asides. Crystal trades his Mets cap for a Stetson as the film races toward a climactic action sequence. The witty, charming seduction turns into a big, sloppy kiss as the guys prove their manhood and change for the better.

City Slickers is a touch too slick, but it's lovingly and skillfully executed, its laughs many and genuine. So, who's arguing? —Marianne Meyer

The Naked Gun 2-1/2: The Smell of Fear

1991. Leslie Nielsen, Priscilla Presley; dir. David Zucker. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (PG-13) 85 min. priced for rental. LD \$34.95, letterboxed or pan-and-scan. Paramount.

Who says sequels have to be second-best? Rude, crude and shameless in its pursuit of cheap laughs, *The Naked Gun 2-1/2: The Smell of Fear* doesn't break new ground, but it's even dumber than the original, if that's possible. The latest hilarious installment in the saga of crime-busting Lt. Frank Drebin (Leslie Nielsen) finds the inept cop in Washington, D.C., where he inadvertently subjects Barbara Bush to endless indignities, from being whacked in the head with a lobster to getting hurled off a balcony in her underwear. Bad taste? Sure, though it's no worse than what befalls his colleague Nordberg (O.J. Simpson), who's carried to Detroit underneath a bus, or

Drebin himself, who swims through raw sewage to battle the forces of evil.

Along with the in-your-face slapstick, including a wicked parody of *Ghost*, *Naked Gun 2-1/2* features plenty of the sneaky *Mad* magazine-style details that kept the first film cooking. Straight-faced troupers Priscilla Presley and George Kennedy return to witness Drebin's idiocies, while crooner Robert Goulet makes a suitably sinister villain, playing a ruthless mogul who'll stop at nothing to derail the government's energy conservation efforts. Surprisingly, this relentless farce comes with a sincere environmental message, although director Jerry Zucker never lets social responsibility get in the way of fun. After all, Drebin is no bleeding heart—just a guy who dreams of a world where he can eat a sea otter without getting sick. —JY



Seafood Surprise: Leslie Nielsen in *Naked Gun 2-1/2*.

Straight Out of Brooklyn

1991. Lawrence Clifford Jr., George T. Odom, Ann D. Sanders; wr./dir. Matty Rich. Hi-fi surround. (R) 83 min. \$92.99. HBO.

Student films are made almost daily that look better than *Straight Out of Brooklyn*. With its uneven lighting, poor sound and often clumsy staging, the picture looks like the work of a self-taught filmmaker. That's just what it is—the teen-aged Matty Rich dropped out of film school and made this movie instead. What makes it work is the passion of a young artist telling a story he simply had to get out of him.

The Brown family lives in a cramped apartment in Brooklyn's Red Hook projects. Daddy (George T. Odom) pumps gas. Mommy (Ann D. Sanders) does domestic work—that is, if Dad hasn't beaten her up too badly during his usual weekend drunken tantrum. The son, Dennis (Lawrence Clifford Jr.), is smart and handsome, but he can't bear it any longer—and he knows when the local drug dealer makes his regular pickup.

Rich goes straight to the gut reality of what a family bred in poverty can do to itself. The visual clichés associated with the ghetto, like graffiti and rusted cars, are not to be found here; all we really have to look at is the people, though Rich does heighten the mood by shooting in the winter. Few scenes can be more chilling than the father's drunken railing against an invisible White Man, symbol of the rage and frustration he is unwittingly passing on to his children.

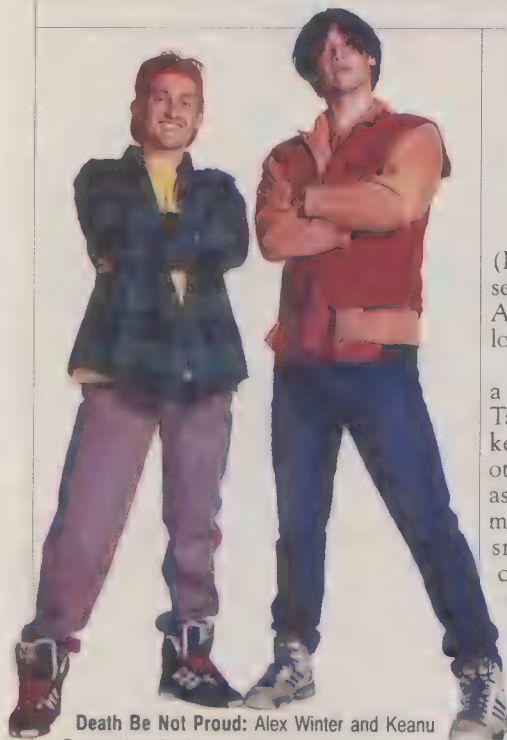
Straight Out of Brooklyn is a grimly powerful film that thrusts us directly into a world we only thought we knew. The rookie-director faults barely get in the way of Rich's scary accomplishment.

—Sol Louis Siegel

Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey

1991. Keanu Reeves, Alex Winter, George Carlin; dir. Peter Hewitt. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG) 98 min. \$92.98. Orion.

True stupidity can be fun, and these two dudes are truly stupid. Expanding on the premise that such moronic metalheads will save the world, *Bogus Journey* actually succeeds as a more excellent adventure than its predecessor. Gone are simple anachronisms like Napoleon in a shopping mall. The se-



Death Be Not Proud: Alex Winter and Keanu Reeves buy the farm in *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*.

quel fries bigger fish as our righteous heroes are killed by evil replicants from the future and sent bumbling through heaven and hell. While Bill and Ted grapple with most heinous metaphysical concepts, a terrifically mortified, Bergmanesque Grim Reaper (William Sadler) nearly steals the show. The film slumps when the twosome return to mortality to face off against Evil Bill and Evil Ted, but it's mostly a madcap journey that even a slightly punchy intellectual could love. —MM

Life and Nothing But

1990. Philippe Noiret, Sabine Azema, Pascale Vignal; dir. Bertrand Tavernier. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled. (PG) 135 min. \$79.98. Orion.

Open Doors

1990. Gian Maria Volonte, Ennio Fantastichini; dir. Gianni Amelio. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled. (R) 108 min. \$79.98. Orion.

These distinguished European dramas are their respective nations' equivalent of our Academy Award-type movies, but achieve their considerable power through character development and honest emotion rather than "big" themes and production values. Bertrand Tavernier's *Life and Nothing But* offers a rich portrait of life in 1920 France, a country still dealing with the scars of World War I. An army major (Philippe Noiret) is attempting to account for 350,000 men still listed as missing in action, in the process fending off both frantic relations and politically minded generals. Among the former are Alice

(Pascale Vignal), a schoolteacher in search of her fiancé, and Irene (Sabine Azema), a senator's daughter-in-law looking for her husband.

What this trio is really looking for is a life after the war, just like France itself. Tavernier shows how the recent past keeps getting unearthed, literally and otherwise, and how "normal" life will reassert itself in new forms in the face of major upheavals. The picture is full of small, memorable details; the gruff, commanding Noiret and the strong-willed Azema make a romantic couple as endearing as it is unlikely. It's too bad Orion chose to pan-and-scan the movie, doing serious damage to Tavernier's widescreen compositions.

Open Doors, set in 1937 Sicily, opens with a horrendous multiple murder. What follows, however, is no standard courtroom drama. The killer is supposed to be quickly executed, but one of the trial judges (Gian Maria Volonte) insists, despite considerable pressure, on searching for buried facts. Director Gianni Amelio manages an atmosphere of disturbing, subtle menace which finally gives way to hope as we see what he is really after, a search not for factual truth but for a state of grace in which we will be human beings and not beasts. The final scenes are deeply moving; the film as a whole makes the strongest possible case that the quality of mercy is never strained. —SLS

Delirious

1991. John Candy, Mariel Hemingway, Raymond Burr; dir. Tom Mankiewicz. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG) 96 min. \$94.99. LD \$24.98. MGM/UA.

Just when you'd given up, here's a tantalizing hint of how good John Candy can be. *Delirious* casts the SCTV vet as a lovelorn soap-opera writer who receives a knock on the head and wakes up to find his creations have come to life, more treacherous and outlandish than ever. David Rasche, Emma Samms and Raymond Burr all have great fun playing one-dimensional characters, while spunky Mariel Hemingway is an engaging love interest. But it's Candy's keen timing and winning sweetness—he still has the best laugh in the movies—that make this amiably slight comedy work. Now somebody give the guy a challenge! —JY

EDITOR'S CHOICE

by

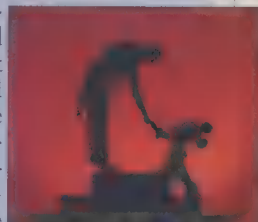
kenneth korman

It's hard not to feel a little disappointed when you first open the deluxe CAV laserdisc edition of *Fantasia*. The much-vaunted "extras"—used as justification by Walt Disney Home Video for charging \$100 for the package—don't amount to much. The souvenir booklet is nice but far from unique, while the limited-edition lithograph is marred by a stamp over one corner intended to verify its authenticity. Worse, though, is the huge outer box: It's an inch wider and 2-1/2 inches taller than other disc packages, and simply will not fit on any standard bookshelf. The first coffee-table video has arrived, and if we're lucky, it will be the last.

But my displeasure evaporated as soon as I put a disc in the player. I can't imagine how *Fantasia* could look any better than it does here.

The colors are actually more vivid than those of last year's theatrical reissue, and the sound is amazing—these 50-year-old recordings, which have always sounded unbearably shrill to me, are suddenly a joy to hear. And orchestral music has never received such a detailed and directional Dolby Surround mix. Image Entertainment did an excellent job on its end.

If ever there was a movie built for CAV, it's *Fantasia*. The ultimate animated film transforms into a picture gallery of more than 200,000 individual drawings in this format, many revealing details that otherwise go by too quickly to be detected. Disney might have made full use of this capability, producing a multimedia supplement about the making of the film. And an analog-track interview with the surviving filmmakers would have made this a true historical document. Instead we get a superficial TV special—originally made for the Disney Channel—and a series of missed opportunities. So if the picture gallery doesn't interest you, stick with the \$40 CLV version—its picture and sound are virtually indistinguishable from the more expensive edition. ■





Orient Express: *Ju Dou* is the first feature film from China aimed squarely at Western audiences.

Ju Dou

1990. Gong Li, Li Baotian; dir. Zhang Yimou. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled. (PG-13) 94 min. \$89.95. LIVE.

Iron & Silk

1991. Mark Salzman, Pan Qingfu; dir. Shirley Sun. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (PG) 98 min. \$89.95. LIVE.

Ju Dou, the first Chinese production to gain any real audience in the U.S., is an exceptional piece of filmmaking. It's tightly written and directed, finely acted, beautifully photographed and elemental in its emotional impact. Jinshan, a prosperous dyer in a rural village around 1920 (it could have been 1820), buys young brides and brutalizes them when they fail to produce heirs. Ju Dou (the extraordinary Gong Li), the latest victim, sees a way out—Tianqing (Li Baotian), Jinshan's repressed nephew, is clearly enamored of her. Eventually they make the heir, and then they get even. What they forget is that little boys do grow up.

The similarities to *The Postman Always Rings Twice* are obvious enough, and invite the sneaking suspicion that director Zhang Yimou may have agreed to film a story that wasn't entirely "Chinese" in order to attract foreign backing and audiences. Yimou, however, places that story in a historic and social context of feudal values and traditions that make tragedy inevitable, and he charges it with erotic imagery that, for a change, is really erotic. LIVE has elected to pan-

and-scan the widescreen movie, but even that's managed more skillfully than usual.

Iron and Silk, Mark Salzman's wonderful memoir of his two years as an English teacher and martial-arts student in China, has been made into a disappointing movie. The book, a quick, easy read, has more to say about modern China in nearly every compact chapter than the whole of the film, which is earnest but rather stiff in its recreations of past events. There is also more simplification and fictionalization than should have been necessary. Given the engaging screen presences of Salzman and martial-arts master Pan Qingfu, who play themselves, and the opportunity to shoot in China (just before Tiananmen Square), it's a pity the filmmakers didn't have more faith in the intelligence of their audience. —SLS

The Big Dis

1990. B&W. James Haig; dirs. Gordon Erikson, John O'Brien. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 88 min. \$59.95. First Run Features.

The Big Dis is a small wonder: an independent black-and-white feature that carves a goofy narrative out of what looks to be a real-life weekend of would-be debauchery. Boasting two directors, Gordon Erikson and John O'Brien (and no credited writer), *The Big Dis* details the unfulfilled lust of the hapless J.D. (James Haig) as he spends an aimless weekend skulking through endless social set-ups in quest of "women's virtue."

The Big Dis starts at 5 p.m. Friday as J.D. touches down at the airport on a three-day pass from the military. From the start, J.D.'s karma is stamped on his forehead: He gets the phone number of a gorgeous stewardess and then stares in agony as the wind snatches it from his hand and blows it well out of reach behind a cyclone fence. As J.D. meanders from one attempted conquest to the next, he fails to glean as quickly as the audience may that there is a female side to these games of conquest, and that while J.D. may be playing a fair game of checkers, he's no match for the chess-player mentality of the women he encounters.

The Big Dis has a static charm not unlike Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*—this quasi-documentary should not be dissed too quickly.

—John Walker

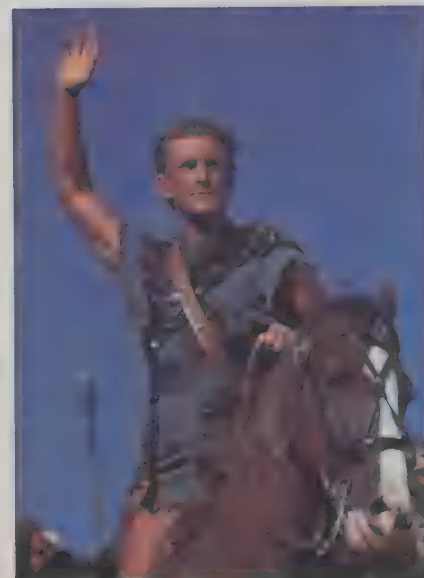
CLASSICS

Spartacus

1960. Laurence Olivier, Kirk Douglas, Jean Simmons; dir. Stanley Kubrick. Hi-fi surround, letterboxed or pan-and-scan, cc. (PG-13) 196 min. \$19.95. LD also. MCA/Universal.

It's not hard to think of Hollywood classics more deserving (and in greater need) of restoration than the 1960 gladiator epic *Spartacus*. This film's infamous bath scene, in which General Crassus (Laurence Olivier) flirts obliquely with slave Antoninus (Tony Curtis) by talking about snails and oysters, is rather silly and adds nothing to the film. (It's not even Olivier's voice we hear: Anthony Hopkins redubbed the missing soundtrack for the late Lord Larry.) Almost all the rest of the 11 restored minutes consists of overture, intermission and closing music.

Still, the restoration campaign should serve to reinstate the faded reputation of this surprisingly intelligent and entertaining film. The first hour is often campy, but *Spartacus* is far removed from those brainless Italian muscleman movies of the '60s. Dalton Trumbo's screenplay skillfully counterpoints the doomed slave revolt led by Spartacus with the beginning of Rome's fall into a fascist-like tyranny, a blunt metaphor for Mc-



Leader of the Pack: Kirk Douglas starts a slave revolt in Stanley Kubrick's widescreen epic, *Spartacus*.

Carthyism. The lavish battle scenes—which used 8,000 extras—and the more intimate dramatics from a memorable cast are equally compelling.

The restoration has also resulted in a crisp new print of a film which won Academy Awards for art direction, costume design and cinematography. It is available on cassette in both letterboxed and panned-and-scanned versions: The latter is adequate, but the former really shows why *Spartacus* earned those Oscars.

—M. Faust

March of the Wooden Soldiers

1934. Colorized. Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Charles R. Rogers, Charlotte Henry; dir. Gus Meins. Mono. (NR) 78 min. VHS only, \$19.95. GoodTimes.

Ninety-nine times out of 100, colorization stinks. *March of the Wooden Soldiers*, the original *Babes in Toyland*, is the exception. This children's tale actually benefits—not from the Crayola brights one might expect, but from muted pastels and odd shades from peach and lavender to avocado and mustard. And the story—with restored scenes—still holds up: The comic antics of Laurel and Hardy temper the melodramatic extremes of ■ saccharine Bo-Peep and the leering villain, Silas Barnaby. As Mother Goose sings of Toyland, “You are ever happy there.”

—April P. Bernard

LASERDISCS

Kiss Me Kate

1953. Howard Keel, Kathryn Grayson, Ann Miller, Tommy Rall; dir. George Sidney. Digital stereo. (NR) 111 min. CLV 2 sides. \$34.98. MGM/UA.

This single-disc reissue is as good a version of *Kiss Me Kate* as we're likely to see, and a major improvement on MGM's old three-sided edition. Where the old disc suffered from muddy colors, the new one is a dazzling array of blazing hues—some parts are too red, and a few of those reds bleed, but these flaws aren't too distracting.

The movie itself is the screen's most successful adaptation of ■ Cole Porter musical, a romantic comedy delight built play-within-a-film style around a musical version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, with an embattled pair of ex-spouses (Howard Keel, Kath-



Gotta Dance: Howard Keel, Kathryn Grayson and company perform another spirited number in *Kiss Me Kate*.

ryn Grayson) cast together. A romance between a pair of young dancers (Ann Miller, Tommy Rall) adds some terpsichorean allure. They're joined by Bob Fosse, Bobby Van, Carol Haney and Jeanne Coyne in “From This Moment On,” a brilliant ensemble number that marked Fosse's debut as a choreographer.

The digital sound does full justice to Andre Previn and Saul Chaplin's Oscar-nominated arrangements. And the theatrical trailer, which includes outtakes and alternate shots from the film, is a double bonus.

—Bruce Eder

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves

1991. Kevin Costner, Morgan Freeman, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Christian Slater, Alan Rickman; dir. Kevin Reynolds. Digital surround, letterboxed, cc. (PG-13) 144 min. CLV 3 sides. \$39.98. Warner.

The Adventures of Robin Hood

1938. Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains; dirs. Michael Curtiz, William Keighley. Digital mono. (NR) 103 min. CLV 2 sides. \$24.98. MGM/UA.

These disc versions of the Robin Hood legend, filmed more than half a century apart, both offer something to be merry about. The first, while vastly entertaining, opts for a heavier, dramatic tone, while the second playfully romps through the 12th century with glorious color.

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, for all its drama, does suffer from one near-fat-

al error: the casting of the wooden Kevin Costner. Surrounded by classically trained actors like Morgan Freeman and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio who blend marvelously into this period piece—even Christian Slater abandons his Nicholson-ese—Costner is a '90s kinda guy out of his element. He shows no more feeling than a fretful child denied his dessert.

But when Robin's mouth is shut and his bow and arrow poised, the film takes off. Locations in England and France serve as rich backdrops for stunning sequences that blatantly beg for your emotional reaction—and get it. And the disc's slight letterboxing only magnifies this: Celts moving to attack Sherwood Forest appear even more menacing in a long, widescreen line as they approach through the trees, and blazing arrows travel better across a horizon than a boxy image.

In 1938, those arrows came from Errol Flynn, whose spirit and charm enlivened the character and gave the film a lighter touch. *The Adventures of Robin Hood* won three Oscars, but it most deserved the art direction prize: The vivid Technicolor reds and greens belong to this world of pageantry.

The villain here is King Richard's scheming brother, Prince John, portrayed with a crafty, condescending air by Claude Rains (who would join director Michael Curtiz again for *Casablanca*). He's abetted by Sir Guy of Gisbourne (Basil Rathbone)—also vying for the affection of Olivia de Havilland—whose exciting duel with Robin remains one of screen history's best.

—APB



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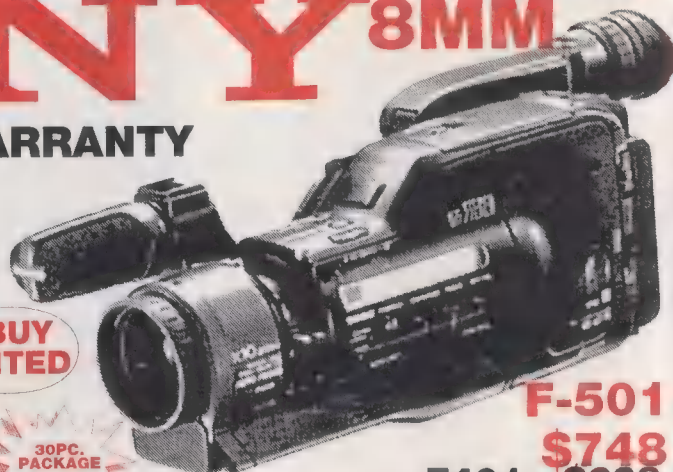


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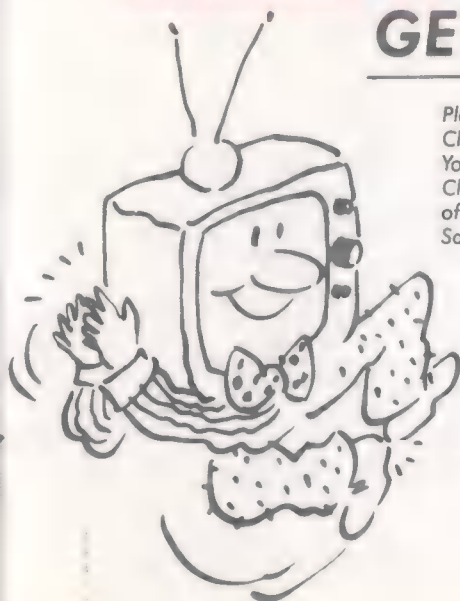
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Mountain Men: Shatner and Nimoy hone their rock-climbing skills in *Star Trek V*'s opening sequence.

Star Trek Collector's Edition

1982-1989. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, et. al.; various directors. Hi-fi surround, letterboxed. (G/PG) 579 min. CLV 14 sides \$149.95. Individual discs \$34.95-\$39.95. Paramount.

For *Star Trek* fans, known for their enthusiasm for collecting, this boxed set of the first five *Trek* movies on consumer video's best format—and letterboxed for the first time—is a dream come true. Unfortunately, laserdisc's nearly perfect picture reveals the technical flaws of the films. The mattes on many space scenes are sloppy, resulting in distracting borders around space stations and some starships. Also, *The Wrath of Khan* reveals a few transfer problems—fine details like control panels flicker more than usual, and in a scene where the *Enterprise* leaves its space dock, there appears to have been dirt on the lens of the telecine converter.

However, Trekkers shouldn't let these small problems scare them away, because all of the discs have exceptional Dolby Surround soundtracks. When the special effects work, they can make al-

most any monitor look great. And discs two, three and four are among the few action flicks that mix phaser blasts, bizarre makeup and shattering explosions with coherent plots and competent characterization.

—Brent Butterworth

I Love Lucy: The 40th-Anniversary Collector's Edition

1991 comp. Digital stereo. 60 min. plus supplements. CLV/CAV \$49.95. *Voyager/Criterion*.

Voyager's first "Criterion Television Classics" disc is an unstinting valentine to *I Love Lucy*. It contains two episodes of the series (complete with credits and commercials), the show's scripts, synopses of all 180 episodes, alternate-channel commentary by *Lucy* writers and crew members, and audio essays by TV historians Bart Andrews and David Marc.

Disc enthusiasts are familiar with the delights of Criterion supplemental packages, which put historical and critical perspective at the film buff's fingertips through CAV's instant-access and still-frame functions. Applied now for the first time to a TV show, these extras work beautifully: Many of the show's participants made themselves available

to address firsthand a spectrum of topics, from Lucille Ball's work habits to the changing role of women. The shorter programming length permitted *Voyager* to put it all on a single disc—a CAV side for the supplements, a CLV side for the two episodes—and price it at \$50, half the cost of some multidisc film sets.

Almost as interesting as the complete episodes are the old Philip Morris cigarette commercials, depicting Lucy and Desi Arnaz happily wreathed in smoke. A close association between sponsor and performer was standard business practice in early TV, and glimpsing it again is a reminder that television has indeed improved since the "Golden Age" of the '50s.

But the level of comedy here did not need improving. Still side-splittingly funny are "The Candy Factory" and "Vitameatavegamin" episodes, remembered fondly by the most casual fans. The shows were shot in 35mm, and the transfers are immaculate. You may notice details that have escaped you in years of syndicated airplay. Produced by Paul Norman and Bart Andrews, this disc earns *Voyager* a standing ovation from everybody out there in TV land.

—Andy Wickstrom

Nosferatu

1922. Max Schreck, Greta Schroeder; dir. F. W. Murnau. Digital mono. (NR) 60 min. CLV 2 sides. \$29.95. Republic.

Murnau's unauthorized 1922 adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was the first silent I ever saw, 30 years ago on a TV show called *Silents Please*. It still packs more of a wallop than the Bela Lugosi, Christopher Lee or Frank Langella versions, mostly thanks to the presence of Max Schreck as the vampire. A thin, misshapen, bat-eared figure with protruding teeth, Schreck's very gaze reeks of contagion—his portrayal, coupled with Murnau's expressionist technique and Schroeder's haunting performance as the heroine, allows *Nosferatu* to live up to its subtitle, "A Symphony of Terror."

The materials used for this long-out-of-copyright chiller are in fairly good shape, a bit worn and blemished but with a healthy contrast level and fairly good detail. The images are viscerally unsettling and this effect is enhanced by an atonal music score which has digitized well.

—BE

SPECIAL INTEREST

Cyberpunk

1990. Dir. Marianne Trench. Hi-fi stereo. (NR) 60 min. VHS only, \$29.95. Mystic Fire.

If terms like "cyberspace," "neuro-mancer" and "virtual reality" have you shredding your Webster's Unabridged in frustration, Mystic Fire's documentary *Cyberpunk* should serve as an excellent introduction to (not to mention a clarification of) a phenomenon in which ■ science-fiction subgenre is literally serving as a blueprint for the future of technology.

Though some would define "cyber-punks" as juvenile delinquents who favor modems and megabytes over switchblades, the phrase harks back to descriptions of *Neuromancer*, an early '80s novel by William Gibson, a delightfully unaffected young author whose on-camera interview is seeded throughout this program. But, as *Cyberpunk* reveals, advanced technological concepts that rolled out of Gibson's manual (yes, *manual*) typewriter are now being adapted and nurtured by everyone from physical therapy pioneer Dr. Joseph M. Rosen to the top brains at NASA's Ames Research Center.

Besides Gibson, others interviewed include Jaron Lanier, founder of VPL, the company behind virtual reality (a computer-generated world that users can actually "enter" via goggles and power-gloves), Michael Synergy, a true cyberpunk who claims the potential to wipe out the world banking system with ■ few well-placed computer viruses, and, of course, the ubiquitous Timothy Leary.

Directed by Marianne Trench, Cy-



berpunk is an excellent introduction to a world with more levels of logic than your basic mainframe. But, like it or not, it's also an excellent introduction to your future. —JW

k.d. lang:

Harvest of Seven Years

1991 comp. Hi-fi stereo. 60 min. \$19.98. LD \$29.98. Warner Reprise.

There was a brief moment when k.d. lang might have been mistaken for just another female country singer. It begins this compilation as a demure young Kathy Lang belts out a song on a 1984 edition of the *Sun Country* TV show. Months later, she returned to that show with a boot camp haircut, beginning a gender-bending country career made all the more effective by her genuine love for "torch and twang."

This 19-clip collection offers a subversive visual subtext to lang's music, explaining to those who have only *heard* her why she's caused such a stir on the scene. Whether doing Buddy Holly in drag in a cheesy independent production or emoting with a trio of legendary country ladies (Loretta Lynn, Brenda Lee and Kitty Wells), lang is riveting. Unpretentious and charming in between-song commentary, she can nonetheless raise the roof with sheer vocal firepower. The last two clips here, including an unsettling AIDS-benefit version of Cole Porter's "So In Love," highlight lang's work with director Percy Adlon (*Bagdad Cafe*). His scenarios reaffirm what fans already know — this lady's a true original. The laserdisc version is another example of Warner Reprise's exceptional work in this format, with picture and sound quality that is second to none. —MM

Future Shock:

Author William Gibson introduces a new era of technological science fiction in Mystic Fire's *Cyberpunk* documentary.



Stand By Your Man? k.d. lang's androgynous image has put a new spin on country music.

The Beatles:

The First U.S. Visit

1991. B&W. Hi-fi stereo. (NR) 90 min. \$89.98. LD \$39.98. MPI.

When it comes to serving up Beatles artifacts, there seem to be two sources. One is the bottom-scraped barrel from which come the watered-down reissues and other recycled product. The other source, however, is some mystical vault which holds ■ treasure-trove of unreleased outtakes, rare performance footage and, of course, the legal rights to a number of Beatle-related materials that *ought* to be available but aren't — like the monaural mix of *Sgt. Pepper* or a hi-fi video of *Let It Be*.

Fortunately, *The Beatles: The First U.S. Visit* is just the sort of release that raises one's hopes about the fate of the Beatles' more significant ephemera. As the title states, this video combines a rarely seen documentary of the Beatles' first group visit to the U.S. filmed by David and Albert Maysles with selected performance footage from all three Ed Sullivan show appearances.

The Maysles' footage captures John, Paul, George and Ringo at a pivotal point in their public personae: making the sometimes awkward transition from British pop stars to international personalities. The Maysles' camera inadvertently captures four young men in the act of contriving the image that would haunt them for years.

The First U.S. Visit also incorporates footage of a live performance in Washington, D.C. For fans of arena rock, this intimate view of the cracker-box staging that passed for state-of-the-art in 1964 will be mind-boggling. For historians of pop culture, *The Beatles: The First U.S. Visit* is like stumbling on an arm of the Venus de Milo. —JW

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DIRECTORY

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

The American Documents Series

1973-76 comps. B&W/color. 13 vols. Fascinating, sentimental collection of historical documentaries: Gloria Swanson narrates a look at the Roaring '20s in "The Age of Ballyhoo," Theodore Bikel talks of immigration in "We All Came to America," Lt. Col. William Anders details "America's Romance With Space" and more. Mono. (NR) 52 min. each. VHS only, \$19.98 each. Republic.

An American Tail

1986. Anim. Voices of Dom DeLuise, Madeline Kahn, Christopher Plummer. Don Bluth's charming feature about Fievel, ■ Russian immigrant mouse, at an even more charming price. Includes "Somewhere Out There," made into ■ hit by Linda Ronstadt and James Ingram. Digital surround. (G) 82 min. LD \$24.98. MCA/Universal.

Audubon

1989. 3 vols. Critically hailed series: Richard Chamberlain narrates "Greed & Wildlife: Poaching in America," *Jaws* author Peter Benchley talks about "Sharks" and Paul Newman leads "Ancient Forests: Rage Over Trees." Mono. 60 min. each. VHS only, \$29.98 each. Vestron.

Babalu Music!

1991 comp. B&W/color. Pr. "Weird Al" Yankovic. On *I Love Lucy*'s 40th anniversary, Ricky Ricardo's performances mixed



Braving the Elements: Some creatures find it easier to withstand *Extreme Winter* than others.

with Yankovic's dance-club medley of tunes from the show, "Babalu!" and snippets of dialog. Stereo. 51 min. VHS, Beta \$14.98. LD \$29.98. CBS Video.

Bumbledown—

The Life and Times of Ronald Reagan

1991. An undignified, uncensored, unflattering view of Ronald Reagan—from a

Spitting Image puppet. Contains scenes never broadcast. Mono. 38 min. VHS only, \$14.98. BFS.

Closely Watched Trains

1966. B&W. Vaclav Neckar, Jitka Bendova, Vladimir Valenta; dir. Jiri Menzel. 1967's Best Foreign Language Film, according to the Academy, about a Czech train conductor eager to prove his manhood. Mono, subtitled. (NR) 89 min. VHS only, \$79.95. Fox Lorber.

Extreme Winter

1990. Dir. Don Brolin. Sports filmmaker Warren Miller journeys through six countries on four continents to find the ultimate skiing challenge. Surround. (NR) 92 min. VHS \$59.95. LD \$34.95. Columbia TriStar.

The General

1927. B&W/tints. Buster Keaton, Marion Mack; dir. Keaton. Keaton in top comedic form as both actor and director in this silent based on true Civil War tale. Engineer struggles to recover his stolen locomotive from Union troops. Digital stereo. (NR) 74 min. LD \$29.98. Republic.

Mountain

1991. Get back to nature with a no-dialog, purely visual account of life on a mountain. Wilderness sounds digitally recorded, plus music by Van Manakas with Scott Cossu. Hi-fi stereo. 45 min. VHS only, \$19.95. EscapeTapes.

The Nasty Girl

1990. Lena Stolze; dir. Michael Verhoeven. Another quality Miramax product: Oscar nominee for Best Foreign Film follows girl sniffing out the secret history of her hometown. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled. (PG-13) 94 min. VHS only, \$89.99. HBO.

The Razor's Edge

1946. B&W. Tyrone Power, Gene Tierney, Anne Baxter, Clifton Webb; dir. Edmund Goulding. W. Somerset Maugham novel inspired this long, yet intriguing tale of WWI veteran re-examining his life and the world. Far better than the 1984 remake starring Bill Murray. Digital mono. (NR) 145 min. LD \$49.98. FoxVideo.

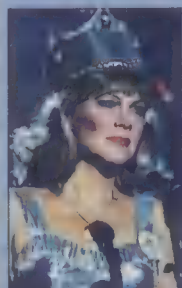
The Reality of My Surroundings: Past to Present

1991 comp. Fishbone—seven musicians whose appearance in Frankie and Annette's *Back to the Beach* hasn't harmed their career—from '85 on. Includes Spike Lee-directed video for "Sunless Saturday," the lead track from latest release. Hi-fi stereo. Approx. 40 min. VHS only, \$14.98. SMV.

Terminator 2: Judgment Day

1991. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Robert Patrick; dir. James Cameron. Is there anyone on Earth who hasn't seen

Labels For Less



Kathleen Turner in *Peggy Sue Got Married*

Just about everyone remembers Jodie Foster in *The Silence of the Lambs*, but who remembers her as a teen who switches bodies with her mother in *Freaky Friday*? **Walt Disney**, for one, and its "Studio Film Collection" includes 11 other titles at \$19.95 each. Also included are *Parent Trap*, *The Love Bug*, *Old Yeller* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

CBS/Fox is remembering the BBC classics. Timothy Dalton, Joan Hickson, Diana Rigg, Ben Kingsley and other Brits appear in such literary winners as the \$39.98 *Bleak House* and the \$29.98 *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *Jane Eyre*, *Mansfield Park*, *Silas Marner*, *Pride & Prejudice* and *Sense & Sensibility*.

But the discs from **FoxVideo** and **Image Entertainment** are more of bargain: For \$24.95, you can take home *A Room With a View*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Breaking Away*, *Peggy Sue Got Married* and six others.

"The Laughs Are on Leo" at **MGM/UA**, where new \$19.98 rib-ticklers include Patty Duke in *Billie*, Lauren Bacall in *Designing Woman*, Lucille Ball in *Forever, Darling*, Anne Bancroft in *Garbo Talks* and 10 others, plus *One, Two, Three*, *Jinxed* and the surprisingly hilarious *Strange Brew* repriced, also to \$19.98. From the king of the jungle to the king of Hollywood: Seven new Clark Gable titles are available at \$19.98, along with the \$14.98 documentary, *Dear Mr. Gable*. —APB



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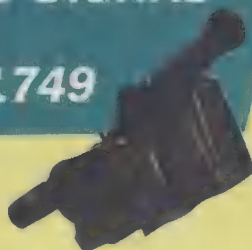
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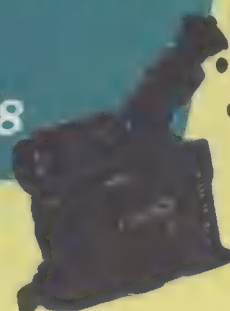
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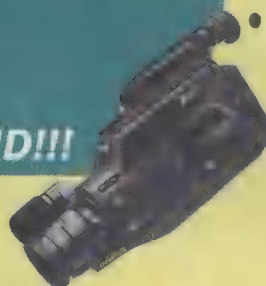
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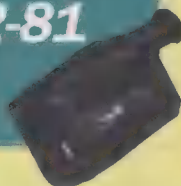
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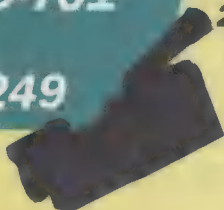
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DIRECTORY

T2? Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 139 min. VHS \$99.95. 8mm price n.a. LD (pan-and-scan or letterboxed, 3 sides) \$29.95. CAV special edition with *Making of Terminator 2* documentary (8 sides) \$89.95. Carolco.

The Wages of Fear

1953. B&W. Yves Montand, Charles Vanel, Peter Van Eyck, Vera Clouzot; dir. Henri-Georges Clouzot. Inspiration for William Friedkin's *Sorcerer*: Four of society's rejects, spurred on by a \$2,000 wage, drive trucks laden with nitroglycerine across dangerous roads of South America. A real hold-your-breath suspenser! Digital mono, subtitled. (NR) 149 min. LD \$59.95. Voyager/Criterion.

The Wanderer

1967. Jean Blaise, Brigitte Fossey; dir. Jean-Gabriel Albicocco. Romantic feast: Young fantasy lovers in end-of-the-century France. Based on Alain Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 108 min. VHS only, \$79.95. Connoisseur.

COMEDY

Dinosaurs

1991. 3 vols. TV sitcom antics, circa 60,000,003 B.C., with a dinosaur family crafted by (Jim) Henson Productions' Creature Shop and brought to life with puppetry and audio animatronics. Hi-fi stereo, cc. Approx. 45 min. each. \$12.99 each. Walt Disney.

Dutch

1991. Ed O'Neill, JoBeth Williams, Ethan Randall; dir. Peter Faiman; pr. John Hughes. Kinda like *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*: Incompatible pair travels home for Thanksgiving. Stereo, cc. (PG-13) 108 min. VHS, Beta \$92.98. LD price n.a. FoxVideo.

Going Under

1991. Bill Pullman, Wendy Schaal, Ned Beatty, Robert Vaughn; dir. Mark W. Travis. Wacky goings-on aboard the U.S.S. Sub Standard, with aquatic special effects from the *Abyss* team. Surround, cc. (PG) 81 min. VHS, Sp.-subtitled VHS \$89.99. Warner.

The Horn Blows at Midnight

1945. B&W. Jack Benny, Alexis Smith, Guy Kibbee; dir. Raoul Walsh. Angel's mission: Destroy Earth with Gabriel's horn. This mildly amusing tale provided Benny with punch lines for years to come. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 78 min. VHS, Beta \$19.98. MGM/UA.

More American Graffiti

1979. Ron Howard, Cindy Williams, Paul Le Mat, Candy Clark, Charles Martin Smith; dir. B.W.L. Norton. They're back – this time muddling through Vietnam, Haight-Ashbury and flower power. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG) 111 min. VHS only, \$79.95. MCA/Universal.

Only the Lonely

1991. John Candy, Maureen O'Hara, Ally Sheedy; wr./dir. Chris Columbus; pr. John Hughes. Domineering mother rules son's life, but when a woman enters the picture... Stereo, cc. (PG-13) 105 min. VHS, Beta \$92.98. LD (digital surround, letterboxed) \$39.98. FoxVideo.

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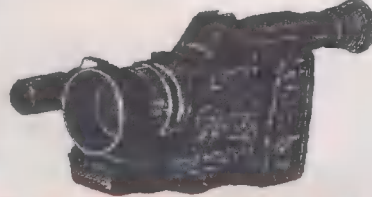
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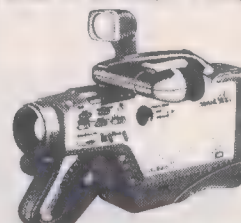
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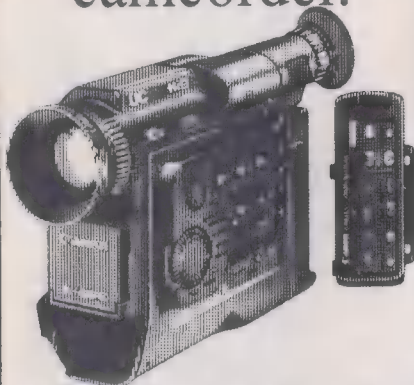
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DIRECTORY

Problem Child 2

1991. John Ritter, Michael Oliver, Amy Yasbeck, Jack Warden; dir. Brian Levant. Pint-size hellion teams with equally devious little girl. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG-13) 91 min. VHS, Beta priced for rental. LD \$34.98. MCA/Universal.

DRAMA

The Bastard

1978. Andrew Stevens, Olivia Hussey, Kim Cattrall, Patricia Neal; dir. Lee H. Katzin. John Jakes novel provided fodder for this TV miniseries, with rowdy American Revolution action and a parade of *Love Boat*-caliber guest stars. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (NR) 189 min. VHS only, \$79.95. MCA/Universal.

Dying Young

1991. Julia Roberts, Campbell Scott; dir. Joel Schumacher. Even Julia Roberts' somewhat dubious talents couldn't save this dry "tearjerker." Hi-fi stereo, cc. (R) 111 min. VHS, Beta \$94.98. LD price n.a. FoxVideo.

The Fighting Sullivans

1942. B&W. Anne Baxter, Thomas Mitchell, Ward Bond, Bobby Driscoll; dir. Lloyd Bacon. Five brothers from a close-knit Irish family fight—and die—together in World War II. Mono. (NR) 110 min. VHS only, \$69.95. Ivy Classics.

Guilt of Innocence: The Lenell Geter Story

1987. Dorian Harewood, Dabney Coleman, Paul Winfield; dir. Richard T. Heffron. Black man wrongly imprisoned until dedicated lawyer and NAACP step in. Mono, cc. (PG) 95 min. VHS, Sp.-subtitled VHS \$89.95. Vidmark.

Proud Men

1987. Charlton Heston, Peter Strauss; dir. William A. Graham. Dying rancher and "black sheep" son clash. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (M: Mature) 94 min. VHS, Beta \$89.98. Turner.

Requiem for Dominic

1991. Felix Mitterer, Viktoria Schubert; dir. Robert Dornhelm. Hard-hitting, personal piece based on true story: Romanian exile finds his childhood friend has been imprisoned for murderous terrorist act. Mono. (R) 88 min. VHS \$79.95. LD \$39.95. Hemdale.

Robert Kennedy and His Times

1984. Brad Davis, Cliff De Young, Jack Warden, Ned Beatty, Beatrice Straight; dir. Marvin J. Chomsky. Actor Brad Davis—who recently died of AIDS—gives a sterling performance as Jack's younger brother. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 335 min. VHS only, \$59.95. Columbia TriStar.

Rodrigo D: No Future

1990. Dir. Victor Gaviria. Gritty, shocking depiction of teen-age life in Colombia's most dangerous city. Locals acted in the film, and, to attest to its reality, eight of them were killed after production was completed. Stereo, subtitled. (NR) 92 min. VHS only, \$79.95. Kino.

Without Warning: The James Brady Story

1991. Beau Bridges, Joan Allen; dir. Michael Toshiyuki Uno. Bridges excels as John

Hinckley Jr.'s unintentional victim. Hi-fi stereo. (NR) 120 min. VHS only, \$89.99. HBO.

ACTION/ADVENTURE

Born to Ride

1991. John Stamos, John Stockwell, Teri Polo; dir. Graham Baker. Heartthrob plays leader of Army motorcycle troop during WWII. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG) 88 min. VHS, Beta, Sp.-subtitled VHS \$92.99. Warner.

The Brotherhood of the Rose

1988. Robert Mitchum, Peter Strauss, Connie Sellecca, David Morse; dir. Marvin J. Chomsky. Pair raised as brothers and trained as spies—then betrayed by the man they knew as their father. Stereo, cc. (PG-13) 103 min. VHS, Sp.-subtitled VHS \$89.95. Vidmark.

Night of the Kickfighters

1991. Andy Bauman, Adam West; dir. Buddy Reyes. Batman in a kickboxing movie? Bam! Pow! Ouch! Hi-fi stereo. (NR) 87 min. VHS only, \$89.95. AIP.

Toy Soldiers

1991. Louis Gossett Jr., Sean Astin; dir. Daniel Petrie Jr. When the going gets tough, so do prep-school boys. Stereo, cc. (R) 104 min. VHS, Beta priced for rental. 8mm price n.a. LD (digital surround) \$34.95. Columbia TriStar.

HORROR/THRILLER

Black Rainbow

1991. Rosanna Arquette, Jason Robards, Tom Hulce; wr./dir. Mike Hodges. Medium "sees" murder and mayhem. Surround, cc. (R) 103 min. VHS, Beta \$89.98. LD price n.a. Media.

Child in the Night

1990. Tom Skerritt, JoBeth Williams, Elijah Wood; dir. Mike Robe. Eight-year-old watches his father's murder, then locks clues away in his mind. Stereo. (NR) 93 min. VHS, Beta \$79.95. Triboro.

Dark Obsession

1991. Gabriel Byrne, Amanda Donohoe; dir. Nicholas Broomfield. Is he going mad, or is his wife really having an affair? Stereo. (R, NC-17 versions) 87 min. VHS \$89.95. Beta \$29.95. Prism.

Delusion

1991. Jim Metzler, Jennifer Rubin, Kevin Secor; dir. Carl Colpaert. Sexy sleeper examines trio driving through desert. Definitely worth a look. Stereo. (R) 100 min. VHS \$89.95. LD (letterboxed) \$34.95. Columbia TriStar.

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1989. Anim. A little more ambitious than the *Ninja Turtles*: Peter O'Toole provides the voice for Sherlock Holmes in four mysteries from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and two Alexander Dumas works are animated ("The Corsican Brothers," "The Black Tulip"). Stereo. 47-67 min. each. VHS only, \$12.95 each. Strand VCI Entertainment. ▶

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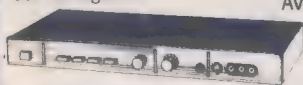
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- Universal Title superimposes titles with ease to any system
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Plus! Can be powered by video camera, AC adapter or AA batteries!

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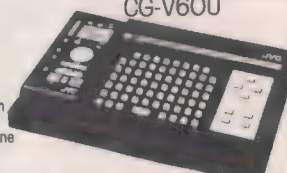
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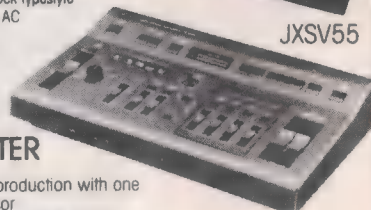
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The Direct ED+ Super
 Includes all the features of the Direct ED+ and

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 TITLE Built-in Character generator internal graphics (12 type styles and 64 colors)
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VDM200

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 PLUS-VidiMate features split screen for before/after comparison

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In Stereo

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- Y/C separator to convert composite video signal to S-VHS
- High quality video amp - w/800 lines of resolution for multiple copies

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VB1

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\$99⁹⁵

SPM-4

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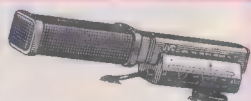
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2 modes - stereo or superdirectional! Plus sensitivity and low-cut selections. 6 times greater sensitivity than built-in mic.



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Works with TR5 & Palmcorder \$79⁹⁵

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RB77S 2hr (2200MAH) for Sony TR5 \$49⁹⁵
PCB15 1 1/2hr (1700MAH) Palmcorder \$29⁹⁵
RPS2 2hr (2200MAH) Palmcorder \$49⁹⁵
HRP83 RCA Pro 850 (1700MAH) \$34⁹⁵

Popular Camcorder Batteries

RBP88 Pana PV200, 300, 420 \$34⁹⁵
RBH22 RCA 200, 300 (CB120) \$34⁹⁵
RBJ66 JVC, Panasonic VHS-C grip \$29⁹⁵
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CB722 Canon E77, E808 1 1/2hr \$34⁹⁵

CAMCORDER LIGHTS FOR BRIGHTER COLOR

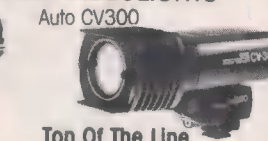
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GZ-200 Zoom Cordless Video Light
Sunpak's latest breakthrough in video lights. Now you can vary the beam of light while shooting! Zoom in on the closeups and/or broaden the beam for group shots! Plus it features a terrific tilt head! Includes 26 min battery & charger.

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Provide Smooth Movement and Extra Camera Protection



VT86 Lightweight tripod features quick release, radial brace and leg locks. Opens to 60" \$39⁹⁵

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Professional Camcorder Lenses

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VST350 3.5x Tele \$179⁹⁵

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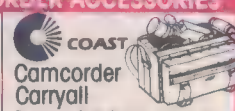
LATEST MODEL



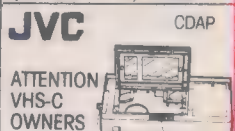
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Rugged Soft-Sided Video Bags
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• External accessory pocket
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R666-Full Size VHS (16 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 7 3/4) \$39⁹⁵



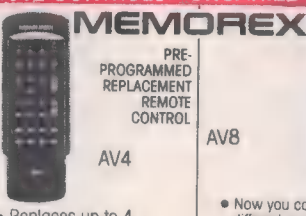
JVC CDAP ATTENTION VHS-C OWNERS
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VIDEO CASSETTE REWRITER VHS-Sol 928
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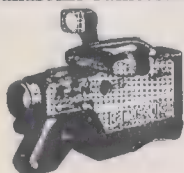
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NEW DESIGN 8mm REWIND/FAST FORWARD 747XT
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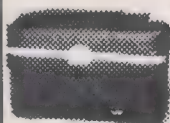
Camcorder LIGHTS



PRO Video TRIPODS



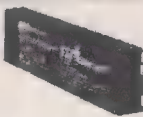
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Camcorder & VCR BATTERIES For Most Brands!!

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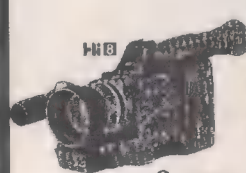
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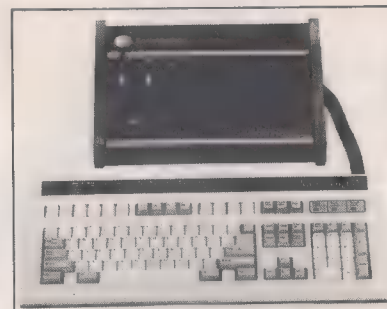
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1. What products do you currently own? 2. What products do you plan to buy in the next 12 months?

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Laserdisc Player/Combination Player B ☐
8MM Camcorder C ☐
8MM Deck D ☐

VHS (VCR) Player E ☐
Laserdisc Player/Combination Player F ☐
8MM Camcorder G ☐
8MM Deck H ☐

3. How many pre-recorded movies do you own? Please indicate by format.

0 VHS Laserdisc BMM
1-9 I ☐ O ☐ U ☐
10-25 J ☐ P ☐ V ☐
26-49 K ☐ Q ☐ W ☐
50-99 L ☐ R ☐ X ☐
100+ M ☐ S ☐ Y ☐
N ☐ T ☐ Z ☐

4. Please indicate all formats in which you view or would like to view pre-recorded movies?

VHS 1 ☐
Laserdisc 2 ☐
BMM 3 ☐

5. Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? 4 ☐ Yes 5 ☐ No

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105
106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135
136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
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181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

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1. What products do you currently own? 2. What products do you plan to buy in the next 12 months?

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8MM Camcorder C ☐
8MM Deck D ☐

VHS (VCR) Player E ☐
Laserdisc Player/Combination Player F ☐
8MM Camcorder G ☐
8MM Deck H ☐

3. How many pre-recorded movies do you own? Please indicate by format.

0 VHS Laserdisc BMM
1-9 I ☐ O ☐ U ☐
10-25 J ☐ P ☐ V ☐
26-49 K ☐ Q ☐ W ☐
50-99 L ☐ R ☐ X ☐
100+ M ☐ S ☐ Y ☐
N ☐ T ☐ Z ☐

4. Please indicate all formats in which you view or would like to view pre-recorded movies?

VHS 1 ☐
Laserdisc 2 ☐
BMM 3 ☐

5. Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? 4 ☐ Yes 5 ☐ No

Please circle product numbers to receive desired information

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
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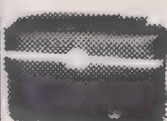
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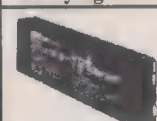
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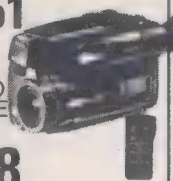
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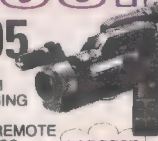
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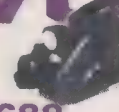
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1991. Anim. 6 vols. Classic stories aimed at girls age 4-12: "Alice in Wonderland," "Cinderella," "Heidi," "The Secret Garden," "Snow White" and "Thumbelina." Mono. 30 min. each. VHS only, \$9.99 each. Video Treasures.

Welcome to the Party

1991. Singing and dancing with Ben Vereen, the Peter Pan Kids and Savion Glover. Mono. Approx. 40 min. VHS only, \$19.98. Parade Video.

SPECIAL-INTEREST

Dark Shadows Music Videos

1991 comp. B&W/color. Recitations by Jonathan Frid and David Selby accompany the Grammy-nominated "Quentin's Theme (Shadows of the Night)" and other "haunting" tunes. Hi-fi mono. Approx. 40 min. VHS \$14.98. LD (also includes "Behind the Scenes" and "Scariest Moments") \$29.98. MPI.

Eyes on Hawaiian Skies

1991. Glorious footage of last year's total solar eclipse makes this must viewing. Also explores astronomical research atop Mauna Kea. Stereo. 45 min. VHS only, \$29.95. Tropical Visions.

An Introduction to Scientology

1991. Features 1966 interview with best-selling author L. Ron Hubbard, who explains his self-help philosophy. Stereo. 58 min. VHS only, \$19.95. AIP.

Irish Homecoming

1991. Music from Clannad, Maura O'Connell and Brian Kennedy accompanies five people traveling through Ireland to discover their roots. Mono. 64 min. VHS only, \$29.95. Rego Irish Records, Tapes & Video.

A Nite With a Lava Lite

1991. Music, music, music in sync with 15 different lava lamps and two female torsos. Stereo. 58 min. VHS only, \$14.95. Megapop Production Co.

The Thrill of Flight With Burner: Once a Blue Angel

1991. Dir. Paul Marlow. Breathtaking footage of air shows (and behind the scenes) with Bill "Burner" Beardsley, Blue Angels and more. Surround. 56 min. VHS \$19.95. Beta \$24.95. Threshold Releasing.

Van Gogh: A Museum for Vincent

1990. Locations in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Belgium and France add context to this analysis of the Dutch painter and his contributions to post-impressionism. Hi-fi mono. 32 min. VHS, Beta \$29.95. Kultur.

SPORTS/FITNESS

Bo Knows Bo

1991. Profile of football and baseball star Bo Jackson. Hi-fi stereo, cc. 45 min. VHS, Beta \$19.98. CBS/Fox.

CherFitness: A New Attitude

1991. Cher's hits and hips—plus thighs, chest, arms and legs—form basis of modular workout. Hi-fi stereo, cc. VHS, Beta \$19.98. CBS/Fox.

Super Bowl Dream Team

1991. Results of fall poll in the NFL's Pro

Magazine. Hi-fi mono. 55 min. VHS, Beta \$14.98. Media.

Swim, Play & Learn

1990. Guide to teaching children from six months to 14 years—or adult non-swimmers—how to feel comfortable in the water and perform basic skills. Stereo. 32 min. VHS only, \$19.95. Medley Swim Systems/Walkabout Productions.

MUSIC/PERFORMING ARTS

Don't Look Back

1967. D.A. Pennebaker (*Monterey Pop*, *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*) dogs Bob Dylan's footsteps on 1965 tour of England. Hi-fi stereo. 90 min. VHS \$19.98. LD \$29.98. Warner Reprise.

Forever and Ever

1991 comp. Country music favorite Randy Travis—at home in Nashville, on TV, on tour, in music videos and as a child. Hi-fi stereo. 45 min. VHS \$16.98. LD \$24.98. Warner Reprise.

Lennon—A Tribute

1991. More than 25 top artists—such as Billy Joel, Lenny Kravitz, David Bowie, Michael Jackson and U2—cover Lennon and Beatles tunes. Archival footage of the musician completes the package. Stereo. 90 min. VHS only, \$19.98. SMV.

Two Rooms

1991. Tribute to composer Elton John and lyricist Bernie Taupin features covers (the Beach Boys' "Crocodile Rock," the Who's "Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting"), interviews and vintage performances. Hi-fi stereo. 90 min. VHS \$19.95. LD \$29.95. Gift set (VHS & CD) \$34.95. PolyGram.

LASERDISCS

Arthur C. Clarke's World of Strange Powers

1985. 4 vols. Everything you always wanted to know about the mysterious and bizarre, but were afraid to ask. Segments include "Have We Lived Before?" and "The Roots of Evil." Vols. 1-3 digital mono. Vol. 4 digital stereo. (NR) 78-104 min. each. Vols. 2-4 side 2 CAV. \$39.95 each. Image.

Cyrano de Bergerac

1991. Gerard Depardieu, Anne Brochet; dir. Jean-Paul Rappeneau. Digital surround, subtitled, cc. (R) \$49.95. Orion.

Fifteen Years of MacNeil/Lehrer

1990 comp. Journalists who set standards: public television's Robin MacNeil and Jim Lehrer. Digital mono. 64 min. Side 2 CAV. \$29.95. PBS.

Frederic Remington

1990. Portrait of the 19th-century artist—shot in detailed HDTV—whose works vividly recapture the spirit of the old West. Paintings and sculptures accessible in still-frame supplement. Stereo. 58 min. Side 2 CAV. \$44.95. Home Vision.

The Incredible Shrinking Man

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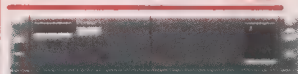
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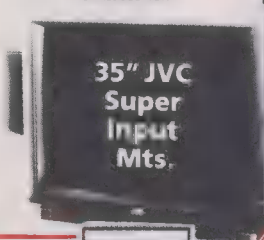
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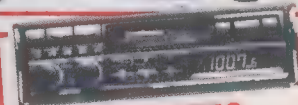
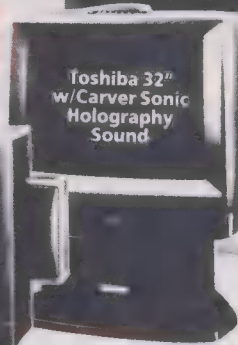
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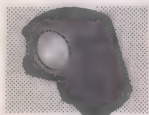
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1984. Robert Redford, Glenn Close, Robert Duvall, Kim Basinger; dir. Barry Levinson. Cinematographer Caleb Deschanel is the star in this nostalgic, gorgeous portrait of Roy Hobbs, a baseball player with ■ heckuva swing and ■ mysterious career. Based on the Bernard Malamud short story. Digital stereo, letterboxed. (PG) 134 min. \$49.95. Pioneer Special Editions.

Truth or Dare

1991. Madonna; dir. Alex Keshishian. Digital surround, letterboxed, cc. (R) 118 min. \$34.95. LIVE.

Tumbleweeds

1925. B&W/tints. William S. Hart, Barbara Bedford; dir. King Baggot. Famed for two reasons: outstanding Oklahoma land rush sequence and farewell performance of the silents' leading western actor, William S. Hart. Digital stereo. (NR) 81 min. \$29.98. Republic.

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EscapeTapes, 121 Fifth Avenue North, Suite 117-B, Edmonds, WA 98020-3163; 206-776-2482.

Ivy Classics Video, 725 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28207; 704-333-3991.

Medley Swim Systems, Box 19487, Austin, TX 78760; 512-447-6914.

Megapop Production Co., Box 124, Hampton Bays, NY 11946; 212-724-3997.

Rego Irish Records, Tapes & Video, 64 New Hyde Park Road, Garden City, NY 11530; 800-854-ERIN.

Threshold Releasing, Box 47440, Seattle, WA 98146; 800-225-2376.

Tropical Visions Video, 62 Halaulani Place, Hilo, HI 96720; 808-935-5557.

Tapes

Sales: Columbia House Video, Box 1112, Terre Haute, IN 47811; 800-544-4431. **Movies Unlimited**, 6736 Castor Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19149; 800-523-0823.

Sales & Rentals: Evergreen Video Society, 228 West Houston Street, New York, NY 10014; 800-225-7783; in NY 212-691-7362.

Rentals: Home Film Festival, Box 2032, Scranton, PA 18501; 800-258-3456; in PA 800-633-3456.

Discs

Ken Crane's, 14260 Beach Boulevard, Westminster, CA 92683; 800-624-3078; in CA 800-626-1768. **LaserDisc Fan Club**, 800-322-2285. **Sight & Sound**, 1275 Main Street, Waltham, MA 02154; 617-894-8633.

Minority Formats

Beta: Brauer Trading Ltd., 26 Emery Lane, Woodcliff Lake, NJ 07675; 800-962-7722. **8mm: Cinema 8**, Suite 1200, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814; 800-446-6388. **S-VHS: Super Source Video**, Box 410777, San Francisco, CA 94141; 800-331-6304.

TIME WARP

continued from page 61

ture-outside-picture) and cropping off the tops or bottoms of pictures to make them fit the wider frames.

JVC's AV-36W1 set proved to be the most remarkable, thanks to motorized blinds at the sides that reduce the viewing area to a 4:3 ratio for conventional TV programs and panned-and-scanned movies. Currently, this is simpler and less expensive than doing the job electronically.

There were plenty of camcorders, and most would be familiar to U.S. videographers, but the Japanese can choose among a host of colors we never see here: white, aqua, yellow, various shades of blue, a peachy orange, lilac, even some exotic two-tone combinations. The most colorful models were from Hitachi, Sony and JVC.

In terms of features, fuzzy logic is harnessed for automatic focus, iris and white balance applications. Digital circuitry is used for image stabilization, electronic zooming, and horizontally squeezing and stretching the picture — features we're beginning to see on U.S. models.

Both shows suggested the potential strength behind the new CD-I format, represented in the U.S. only by players from Philips and Memorex. Pioneer, Sony, Panasonic and Sanyo all showed CD-I prototypes at the Japan Electronics Show. Sony's and Sanyo's players were both portable units with four-inch color LCD screens, while Pioneer's player also accepts laserdiscs and audio CDs. Plenty of CD-I peripherals and development products were also on display. CDTV, Commodore's somewhat similar interactive format, was notable only for its absence.

One completely new twist the Japanese have discovered goes by the term TV-Fax. The concept is actually simple. Facsimile transmissions are piggybacked on broadcast TV signals for simultaneous transmissions. Subscribers with TV-Fax receivers can get hard copies of program schedules, recipes, curriculum material for educational programs, shopping information, event calendars, financial data, virtually anything broadcasters can think up.

The information is carried in ■ sub-audio channel, like SAP sound. The NTSC standard for stereo and SAP broadcasts, which we also use, already allocates ■ data channel. The Japanese just started using theirs first. Companies demonstrating fax receivers included JVC, NEC, Matsushita, Sanyo, Sharp, Sony and Toshiba.

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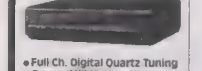
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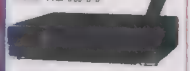
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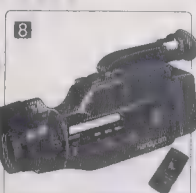
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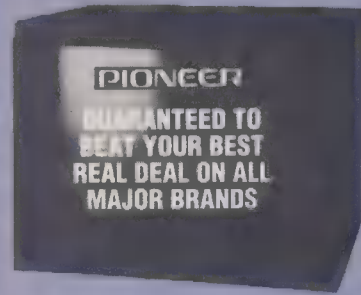
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TOMORROW

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Home Video, throbs with fractals accompanied by selections from the Moody Blues' first two albums. The father of fractals, Benoit Mandelbrot, explains what it all means in *Fractals: An Animated Discussion* (\$60).

Multimillion-dollar supercomputers can take hours to generate a single animated frame depicting complex phenomena like global warming. Factor in the salaries of the scientists involved, and the resulting footage qualifies as among the most costly visuals ever produced. You can see the best of such videos for \$25 on *The National Center for Supercomputing Applications: Scientific Visualizations Vol. 1*. Another example, *Spacetime Visualization* (\$20) by Ping-Kang Hsiung of Carnegie Mellon University, uses supercomputers to colorfully simulate distortions caused by travel near the speed of light.

Media Magic's great accomplishment is giving the public access to demonstrations of headline-making technologies. *Virtual Reality* (\$30) takes you into the labs—at NASA and VPL Re-

search, among others—that are pioneering tomorrow's artificial environments. *Cyberpunk* (\$30), a related video from Mystic Fire, features interviews with visionaries like Jaron Lanier who are creating a new virtual-reality counter-culture.

To bring to life the exotic transformations of cellular automata, Strasmich commissioned science writer Rudy Rucker to demonstrate cellular fundamentals on video, in *Cellular Automata* (\$30). In a similar vein, the work of British artist William Latham, whose exquisite computer-generated sculptures deserve a larger audience, is the subject of *The Conquest of Form* (\$30).

Strasmich's catalog is also an important dispensary for hard-to-find science videos from other sources. These include computer animation compilations, like the *The Mind's Eye* (\$30) from Miramar Productions, *Computer Dreams* (VHS, \$20; laserdisc, \$50) by Digital Video Entertainment, and the collected milestones of *State of the Art of Computer Animation Vol. 1* (VHS, \$20; laserdisc, \$40).

Space exploration fans can order two spellbinders, Don Barrett's production of *The Voyager Odyssey* (VHS, \$25; laserdisc, \$40), tracing the most successful exploration yet of the solar system, and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's *Satellite Imaging* (\$20), which demonstrates the wonders of digital photo interpretation, including an unforgettable simulated Mars fly-over. The future of computer-aided instruction can be glimpsed in such offbeat gems as *The Theorem of Pythagoras* and *The Story of Pi* (\$20 each) by the California Institute of Technology.

Although sales of these videos hardly approach the levels expected for movies, Strasmich has been encouraged enough by their reception to forge ahead with plans for unusual videos from other fields, like astronomy and biology, to expand the catalog's next edition, daring, in a way, to go where no catalog has gone before.

TECH TIP

Macro magic

If your camcorder has no macro focus setting for close-up shooting, try using a set of close-up lenses for a 35mm camera. A typical set includes lenses at three magnifications, and one is sure to work for you. Chances are they won't fit the camcorder lens, so tape them over it with black photographic masking tape. Move the camcorder in and out until the image is sharp. Barry Wizov Pleasantville, New Jersey

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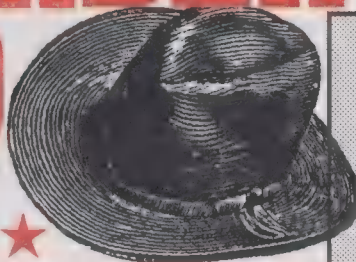
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TECH SPEAK

continued from page 30

grammers like ESPN, HBO, MTV and others, is equal in sound quality to that of laserdisc. But even though VideoCipher II audio signals are digital, the best satellite receivers' distortion levels are appallingly high compared to the other audio equipment you may own. What differentiates audio in the most expensive receivers from those at the bottom of the scale is that the latter may be mono only. One advantage of extra memory is that your receiver can remember and store data on a number of audio formats, so that it's not necessary to retune every time you switch from audio-only to video, or from wide-bandwidth signals to narrow-bandwidth.

Remember, too, that satellite audio emerges from the receiver as discrete left and right channels, not MTS. An exception is the Chaparral 90 receiver, which converts satellite stereo to MTS so it can be reproduced by the MTS circuit in a TV receiver. Several top-of-the-line models also incorporate simple surround-sound circuitry.

Some recent midpriced and high-priced units also incorporate VideoPal, a circuit for ordering pay-per-view movies or entertainment. It's available as a low-cost add-on to every receiver that includes a VideoCipher II descrambler.

Before you decide how much memory you're willing to pay for, ask the dealer to show you how to tune in a satellite and channel, then insist on doing it yourself. If you find the process difficult or if other members of your household are going to be using the unit, step up to a more expensive model.

SUPERFLAT TV

continued from page 24

mask does not distort from overheating and bright parts of a picture do not change color over time. Accuracy of colors is very good to excellent at the standard setting and warm or cool color temperature options. Picture quality controls let you select, store and repeat your preferred settings easily.

Audio quality is also excellent. The speaker enclosures and placement deliver the sound at the outside edges of the picture to maintain a realistic sound image without bulges at the sides of the set. The internal speakers can be run at full volume without the distortion levels common even in high-priced sets. Our overall rating is excellent. The SuperFlat tube is a must-see for anyone shopping for a large, direct-view set.

VIVA WINNERS

continued from page 56

The Godfather Family: A Look Inside is very good news indeed, especially at a reasonable \$130 for this 10-hour program. We would have preferred immaculate new transfers for the first two films, but the old ones more than suffice.

WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (WARNER)

Mr. Wonka's psychedelic factory comes bursting to life with this disc's near-perfect transfer. Just like *Edward Scissorhands*, *Willy Wonka* sounds like an obvious match for the format. But seeing is believing, and *Video Magazine* staffers spent an awful lot of time looking at this particular title in 1991. Adapted for the screen by Roald Dahl from his enchanting children's book, this musical only gets better with age. Oh, and kids have been known to enjoy it too.

TWO FORMATS

continued from page 59

equalization circuits. Vertical interval time code and timebase correction are now available on some pro models by JVC and Panasonic. Some models have digital signal processing and signal-to-noise ratios of 47 decibels, two decibels higher than most consumer VCRs.

Walton notes further innovations in the latest S-VHS pro recorders, including ultra-stable tape transports, chroma enhancement circuits that virtually eliminate color spreading, and an auto equalization circuit that records a pilot signal in the vertical interval of a video so that playback machines can optimize their circuits for each individual tape.

"Some manufacturers use digital noise reduction for chrominance," explains Walton. "At JVC, we are using digital noise reduction for luminance. In some models we have a new high-performance analog noise-reduction circuit that lets us achieve stunning picture quality clear down to the fifth generation."

S-VHS currently supports two channels of hi-fi FM audio and two lesser-quality linear audio channels with Dolby noise reduction. A JVC S-VHS model with two channels of 48-kilohertz, 16-bit digital audio has just been introduced in Japan, but the company says it has no plans to introduce the product in the U.S. at either pro or consumer levels.

THE Hi8 ROUTE

Hi8, the chief challenger of S-VHS,

continued on page 113

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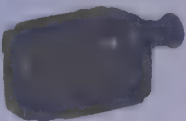
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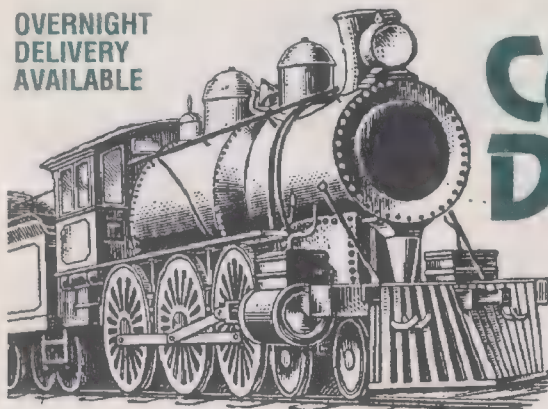
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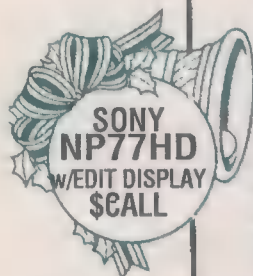
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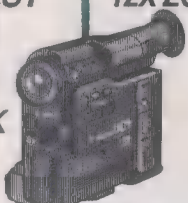


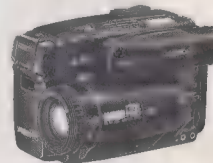
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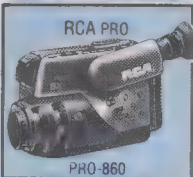
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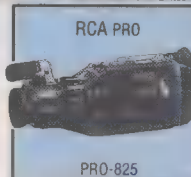
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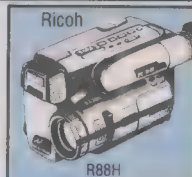
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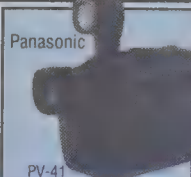
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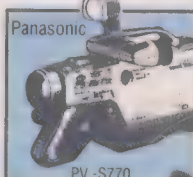
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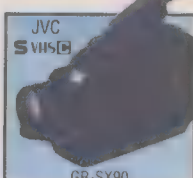
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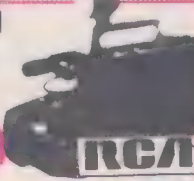


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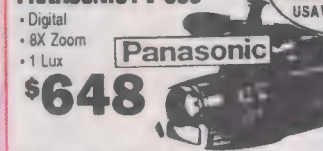


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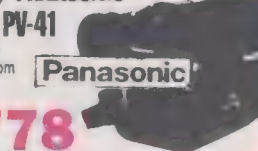
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continued from page 103

has carved its own unique niche in the camcorder market. Thanks to its compact size, Hi8 has quickly been adopted as a specialty acquisition format for some broadcast uses. The miniature Hi8 camcorders have proven especially valuable in war coverage.

Hi8 decks are another story. Right now, there's only one tabletop Hi8 VCR for consumers, Sony's EV-S900, which carries a hefty \$2,000 price tag far beyond most consumer budgets. But while Hi8 consumer decks languish, Sony recently introduced an outstanding new professional Hi8 editing deck. The EVO-9850 features one-frame editing accuracy, timebase correction and a fast response time. Equally important, the 9850 has two independently editable channels of digital audio. Sony borrowed technology from its digital D-2 broadcast machines to introduce audible sound in the jog mode for the digital audio.

Sony is also positioning Hi8 as the format of choice for desktop video applications. The increasing popularity of computer animation in general, and NewTek's Video Toaster in particular, has led to an increased demand for VCRs with single-frame recording capability. This feature is needed because few computers are powerful enough to play complex animations at 30 frames per second. To meet this demand, Sony has introduced the EVO-9650, a \$6,000, single-frame recording Hi8 VCR. When a computer connected to the EVO-9650 renders a frame of an animation, it sends a control signal that tells the VCR to record the frame. Once the frame is recorded, the computer starts rendering the next one. The result is a full-motion animation when the tape is played back.

While machines with such features are clearly for the pros, some components are aimed at consumers. Sony's top-of-the-line CCD-V5000 Hi8 camcorder is a classic example of a consumer product the pros have fallen for. Despite discounts that often lower its street price to less than \$1,800, it offers digital noise reduction, digital timebase correction, digital audio, professional audio VU meters and other features that make the costlier EVO-9100 Hi8 pro camcorder pale by comparison.

Sony's newer CCD-TR81 Hi8 camcorder virtually erases the line between pros and ordinary videophiles. Here was a product created for consumers that professional journalists had long dreamed about—a high-quality, pocket-size, point-and-shoot camcorder. The TR81 was an instant hit for Sony, generating so many orders the company had to air ship units to the U.S. to meet the

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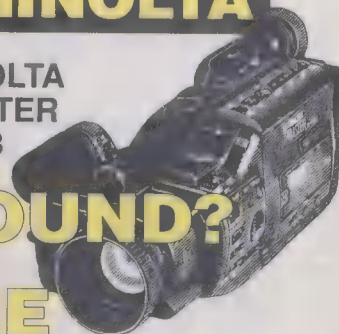
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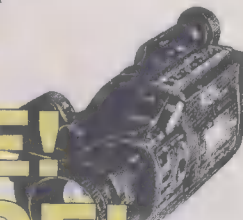
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The rush to miniaturize Hi8 did not end with the TR81. Canon, which chose Hi8 to introduce the first consumer camcorder with interchangeable lenses, countered with the UCS1, a Hi8 camcorder that weighs a mere 1.5 pounds.

TRICKLING BACK DOWN

But if the major advances are occurring at the high end of the equipment scale, what new developments can be expected to emerge in less costly equipment? According to Stan Hametz, Panasonic's vice president of consumer video, "VCR programming procedures will be made easier and standard VHS VCRs will have the ability to play S-VHS tapes at standard resolution. This could also address problems of the software market."

The "software problem" refers to the failure of S-VHS as a medium for pre-recorded programs. While some movie titles are available in S-VHS, the number is relatively few and they're rarely available at rental stores. But, says Hametz, if all VHS VCRs could also play back S-VHS tapes, movie studios might be persuaded to issue more releases in S-VHS. "We know this could take years, but we're looking down the road."

The picture for Hi8 decks is less hopeful. Both Sato and Canon's Mike Zorich say their companies do not have immediate plans to introduce new Hi8 VCRs for consumers. "It's not that we're ceding the home deck market to VHS," says Zorich, "but until we can manufacture a deck at a price that will be attractive to consumers, we are not going to do it. A deck would have to be at or below \$700 to be competitive."

While the line between consumer and pro equipment continues to blur, one fact is becoming clearer—serious amateurs and semiprofessionals, despite their small share of the video market, are increasingly driving manufacturers to break new ground with video technology. The smart video shopper seeking the newest technology must now, more than ever, be ready to explore both sides of the aisle, pro and consumer, to capture the elusive state of the art. ■



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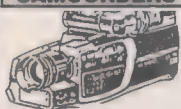
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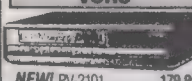
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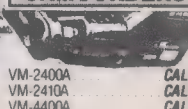
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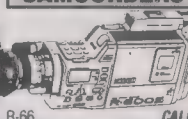


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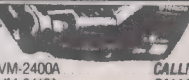
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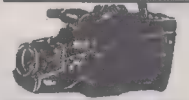


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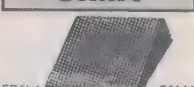
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CAMCORNER

continued from page 28

eye, but the challenge is to put the information together in a compelling manner."

"Even people just interested in getting their family's history on tape find classes a boon," says Lisa Gibbs of the National Alliance of Media Arts Center in Oakland, California. "People easily apply what they learn."

Not to be overlooked, video classes can serve as outlets for personal expression. "We often hold informal screenings

in which students show their projects and get ideas from other video makers," says Jimenez. Even better, videos produced in public access facilities often wind up on local cable channels. For example, tapes from the Center for New Television have been used in two PBS programs, *Image Union* and *The 90's*.

Despite the threat of reduced funding for arts organizations, video training facilities are growing, in part because of the impact of "low-cost video technology, especially camcorders," as Jeter puts it. "Classes encourage people to empower themselves with video tools, rather than feel overpowered."

CABLE

continued from page 66

pay movie channels you would like to see? It's all because large cable systems now own many of the program services they carry. A half-dozen operators control all or part of seven of the 10 most-watched cable channels, including HBO, Nickelodeon, MTV and TNT. According to Jeff Chester, the current regulation bills "fail to take on the problem of separating conduit and content."

The irony is that as cable TV continues to expand, even the most success-

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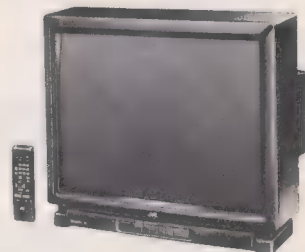


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ful cable networks will find their audience share declining. On one hand, rising basic cable fees are making viewers drop extra pay channels like HBO and Showtime. On the other hand, the increase in available channels (to up to 300 per cable system using fiber-optic cable or multichannel compression techniques) will erode each service's share of the market. To keep up with such changes, MTV is already planning to offer three separate music video channels with different formats starting in 1992. With such multiplication of existing programs, the prospect is for less, rather than more variety in cable's future.

The answer for many observers is more competition, from other cable companies—or from other technologies. Even FCC Chairman Alfred C. Sikes notes that "the competition model has worked well in other communications markets and can work well here." Indeed, the FCC's 1990 *Cable Report* found that where there was cable competition, per-channel prices were 30 percent below the national average, and the pace of technological advances was faster.

But the reality is that of nearly 10,000 local cable systems in the U.S., less than 50 face direct competition. But the establishment of more competing systems has been largely blocked by existing cable systems. Harry Cushing, president of the Competitive Cable Association, explains that "the big cable industry has conducted a vigorous campaign of intimidation and disinformation. They have convinced cities contemplating second franchises to either reject new competitors or burden them with an insurmountable mountain of requirements." Where newcomers have been able to get second franchises, the existing cable companies have blocked their efforts to carry popular cable channels or have undercut their rates so drastically they were able to drive the competitors out of business, only to restore monopoly pricing afterwards.

The cable industry sees the biggest threat coming from phone company efforts to distribute TV programs directly to viewers' homes. Regional phone companies can already offer TV signals outside of their phone service areas, and recent rule proposals by the FCC open the door for local phone companies to offer a "video dial tone." Viewers could dial up a program provider on a pay-per-view basis, just as they currently call up 900-number phone services. Effros argues this would be a form of unfair competition since telephone users would be subsidizing the \$150 billion investment by telephone companies to rewire their

systems with fiber-optic cable capable of carrying TV signals.

Satellite broadcasts already provide some 3.4 million American homes with an effective alternative to cable, albeit at a cost of several thousand dollars for a cumbersome dish and associated gear. But several companies are developing a more economical approach to direct-broadcast satellite services with higher frequency transmissions and smaller antennas.

Later this year, for example, an independent venture called SkyPix plans to debut nationally. It will offer viewers access to 60 channels of pay-per-view movies with a high-quality, 480-line resolution picture—far better than a typical cable picture—and CD-quality sound. The entry price will be about \$700, to purchase a three-foot satellite antenna and a receiver. SkyPix also envisions a monthly cable-style, basic package of programs for \$12.95.

The technology is so promising that the cable industry is also exploring it. Nine of the top 15 cable companies, operating as K Prime Partners, have been offering satellite broadcasts in 40 test markets to supplement, rather than replace, standard cable programs.

The dark horse of cable alternatives is an older technology, which uses microwave line-of-sight transmissions to antennas the size of a catcher's mitt. This is known as wireless cable. With about 50 systems scattered around the country and nearly 300,000 subscribers, wireless cable has been advancing in fits and starts, although the FCC has taken renewed interest in it. In communities where wireless cable competes directly with standard cable, the average cost of a basic package plus one pay channel averages \$10 less per month for wireless.

One often overlooked element that could radically change the status of cable is the U.S. Supreme Court. To date, the court has avoided major decisions regarding cable because it simply felt it didn't have enough information from prior cases to form an opinion on cable TV's status. But what's at stake is the constitutional question of whether cable resembles newspapers, and is therefore subject to the First Amendment (making it immune to any government regulation restricting freedom of speech), or whether cable is like broadcasting, subject to licensing and franchising by governmental bodies. With several cases, like the City of Los Angeles v. Preferred Communications Inc., wending their way up the judicial ladder, it may be just a matter of time before the Supreme Court decides on the fundamental nature of cable.

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change cable for the better? One possibility is to write letters and send faxes to your representatives, senators and local officials. Send copies of your letters to your cable company. "Letters do help, especially with legislation pending on Capitol Hill," says Schwartzmann. "Unless the cable industry feels pressure it won't do anything." Adds Chester: "The public needs to get involved. The quality of the media is as important as the quality of the environment. The public is entitled to receive inexpensive, high-quality information about what is happening in the world."

Another way to indicate your disapproval of cable is to do what I did: Disconnect it. For the equivalent of three months' cable fees, I bought a multielement VHF/UHF antenna from Radio Shack and had a pro install it on my roof. I dreaded the day when the service rep would come around to disconnect the cable. But when I had to rely on the antenna alone, withdrawal from 41 to just 12 channels wasn't as painful as I

had anticipated. In fact, the only thing I really miss is the 24-hour-a-day news on CNN and, occasionally, MTV. Someday I'll have access via a cable alternative to more than just broadcast TV on my home monitor again, but in the meantime I can testify to the fact that you can disconnect your television — and spare yourself the trouble with cable. ■

TRIPLE PLAY

continued from page 62

stacked under the right-hand TV set. In keeping with the ease-of-use goal, the theater system is cued to both decks, so that when the remote control is used to turn either one on, the rest of the components automatically power up.

An AM/FM tuner, an audio cassette deck and a CD changer beneath the left-hand TV set handle music requests. An AudioAccess PX-6 system controller feeds signals from the audio sources into a Sony SDP-777 Dolby Pro-Logic sur-

round-sound processor for media room listening, and into a Sonance power amplifier for channeling to other rooms, served for the most part by Sonance II speakers.

The media room is served by Canon Forum 300S speakers for the front channels and Sonance IIIs in the rear. A Phase Tech subwoofer rests invisibly behind a grille in the lower right corner of the cabinet.

Since the installation occurred during an extensive remodeling, Swearingen had full access to in-wall spaces and was able to work with a cabinet maker to create the wall unit, which includes a variety of snap-on panels and access points that make servicing the system unusually easy. ■

AUDIO INPUT

continued from page 45

dbx-equipped sets, and for which dbx isn't paid a dime.

From dbx's point of view, any dbx-encoded signal must ultimately be decoded through dbx circuitry for the listener to get a true stereo signal. The company is calling for a "truth in labeling" campaign by its other licensees, mockingly referring to non-dbx sets as "psuedo stereo."

Says dbx licensing manager Win Craft: "It's conceivable that some customers might prefer some different type of audio processing, but don't call it stereo. A TV set labeled stereo should have circuitry to deliver a stereo signal." Philips and Sharp have now decided to include dbx decoders in all their future

continued on page 129

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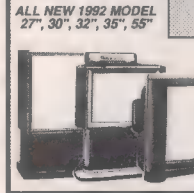
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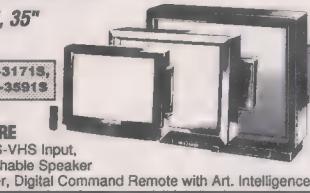
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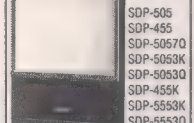
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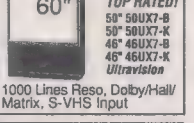
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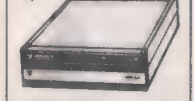
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continued from page 122

stereo sets, beginning at various times in 1992. That leaves Thomson on the hot-seat by itself.

But Thomson came to this battle armed to the teeth. On the same day dbx called for a labeling campaign, Thomson announced it would be granted a patent for what it dubbed "XS Stereo Sound." XS Stereo, Thomson says, combines noise reduction with an expansion system that provides wide stereo imaging on low-priced sets that wouldn't normally be hooked up to external speakers. Thomson says its system, which is included in 12 RCA and 13 GE sets, "properly tracks with the dbx encoding algorithm," but "allows a more cost-effective noise-reduction technology than the competing dbx system in many stereo TV monitors."

As explained by Thomson engineers, XS achieves its wide stereo imaging by purposely destroying the left-right channel separation by introducing an out-of-phase component. Though traditional testing would reveal poor separation, Thomson conceded, the phase shift would deliver a broad stereo stage even from speakers placed extremely close together, such as a TV's own speakers.

Indeed, on-the-spot testing of a pair of Thomson sets at dbx's press conference showed less than one decibel of separation at one kilohertz, a frequency that falls well within the listening range. But the XS Stereo system definitely produces a wide sound image, something like that created by mono surround modes on audio/video receivers.

What's at stake here depends on who you're talking to. Dbx stops short of saying that those who don't use dbx are deceiving the public, but maintains that only its decoder can reproduce a true stereo TV signal. Thomson acknowledges the value of dbx decoding, and will continue to use it in many of its sets. However, it says XS does a better job in cramped quarters, in a more cost-effective manner.

The latter aspect shouldn't be ignored. Although the \$2 or so it costs a TV manufacturer to include dbx circuitry may not seem like much in a \$400 TV set, TV manufacturers' profit margins—particularly on less expensive models—are so slim, it can make a major difference to the bottom line.

As a buyer, if dbx is important to you, check spec sheets and ask your salesperson whether it's included. An easy way to tell is to check the set for a second audio program feature—currently, no XS Stereo sets carry SAP. As long as you're aware of what you're looking at and listening to, you'll be able to make an informed buying decision. ■

COLLECTOR'S CLEARINGHOUSE

When I wrote *Video Magazine* asking to find the Freddie Prinze movie *Can You Hear the Laughter*, I wasn't sure you'd print my request. Fortunately, you did. In two weeks, I received 23 answers from all over the country, and from people who were kind and most sincere in their help. Although I cannot write everyone who answered my call for help, I hope this will serve as an open letter to all who responded. Thanks a lot.

P.S. Someone locally finally provided the film.

Frank J. Vespe
Franklin Square, NY

I'm looking for a VHS copy of *Let George Do It*, a 1940 black-and-white film from Great Britain, and will pay all expenses.

Felix Svetlov
2977 West 33 Street, Apt. 15C
Brooklyn, NY 11224

Remember when TV cartoon shows had live hosts? Gentlemen like Herb Sheldon in New York and Ray Rayner in Chicago quickly become household favorites. So far, I have had no success in locating videotapes of these locally based programs. Can anyone help?

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Philip A. Lieberman
8 South Hazel Street
Tunkhannock, PA 18657

I missed the last two segments of the Sonny Steelgrave story line on *Wiseguys* during their original airing, and on last year's late-night reruns on CBS. I'm interested in finding copies.

Robert H. Reach
25 Birch Lane
Staten Island, NY 10312

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EDITED BY APRIL P. BERNARD

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Matthew Nordin
Rural Route 3, Box 351
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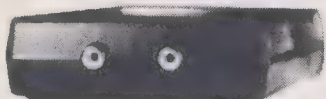
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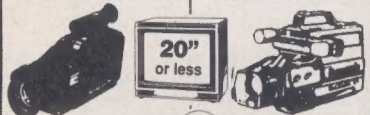
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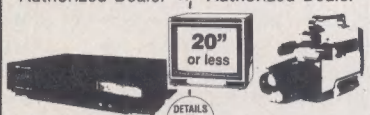
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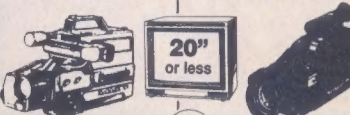
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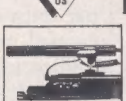
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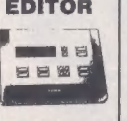
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OFF THE AIR

Home audio royalties: Is video next?

BY FRANK BEACHAM

Is Big Brother, claiming to be doing you a favor, about to erode your rights? I think so, and the vehicle is a Trojan horse called the Audio Home Recording Act. This bill, the subject of recent congressional hearings, reflects a deal struck between record companies, music publishers and electronics manufacturers over the sale of digital audio tape recorders. On the surface, it will free up prerecorded music for new digital formats and stimulate the sales of DAT equipment.

But, in fact, it also taxes consumers, limits their ability to use recording equipment and smooths the way for a new generation of audio equipment which is sonically inferior to current CD and DAT gear.

The compromise also establishes a legal precedent that could easily be extended to a new generation of video recorders. Digital VCRs are just around the corner and offer the promise of pristine, artifact-free pictures and the ability to make copies without losing image and sound quality. If the audio legislation becomes law, you can bet that movie studios will want to levy royalties on digital VCRs and the videotapes that feed them.

Briefly, the audio act prohibits the music industry from suing electronics manufacturers over the issue of copyright infringement in exchange for two key concessions. First, it imposes a system of royalties on the importers and domestic makers of digital recording devices and media. The payments, intended for music creators and copyright holders, would raise equipment and tape costs to consumers. (The fee is 2 percent of the wholesale price for DAT recorders—up to a limit of \$8—and 3 percent for blank media.)

Second, a Serial Copy Management System (SCMS) will be required for all consumer digital recorders. This will prohibit consumers from making second-generation digital copies. Consumers could make direct digital-to-digital cop-

ies only from original recordings.

The Home Recording Rights Coalition and proponents of the bill contend it breaks a long deadlock between equipment makers and the recording industry and clears the way for new digital recording products. But the SCMS copy protection circuit also affects the dubbing of personal as well as prerecorded commercial material.

Why should consumers have to put up with limitations on their recording equipment just to protect the music industry from copyright infringement?



Worse yet, why should consumers suffer such limits on top of royalty fees for equipment and tape?

Ironically, none of this will stop serious tape pirates who will only need to buy slightly costlier "professional" equipment, which, under the bill, would neither be limited by SCMS circuits nor subject to the royalty fee. If the music industry really wants to stop CDs from being copied digitally, it could easily put "flags" in the digital signal which would stop all copying.

The legislation would have another interesting effect. For the first time, the

law would encourage a generation of digital audio equipment which would be inferior in sonic quality to current equipment. Unlike today's CD and DAT formats, the digital compact cassette (DCC) and mini-disc (MD) formats planned for introduction in 1992 use data compression techniques based on assumptions about human hearing. Data which is deemed inaudible is not recorded, reducing the need for storage space on media.

Though the manufacturers of the new formats contend most consumers will not hear any difference, many engineers fear the new formats will actually degrade their recordings. The record industry likes the new formats because each offers less sonic quality than master recordings and because objectionable artifacts from data compression appear in multigenerational copies.

The DAT format, which does not use data compression, has been unsuccessful as a consumer product due in part to legal actions by the music industry against equipment manufacturers. However, DAT sound quality is so good that many professionals now use it for mastering high-quality commercial releases. The record industry does not want this kind of recording quality in the hands of consumers.

The Audio Home Recording Act, sponsored in the Senate by Dennis DeConcini and in the House by Reps. Jack Brooks and William Hughes, has other noteworthy elements. For example, the bill would also make it illegal to sell or modify a piece of equipment that evades the SCMS system, and it keeps royalty accounts secret to protect equipment makers from having sales figures made public.

Everybody gets a piece of the pie except the consumer. Thoughtful users of audio and video equipment had better start asking some hard questions about this proposed legislation before it is too late. If this "compromise" is made into law, the government will for the first time start dictating to citizens how they can and cannot use home recording devices.

KEITH BENDIS



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